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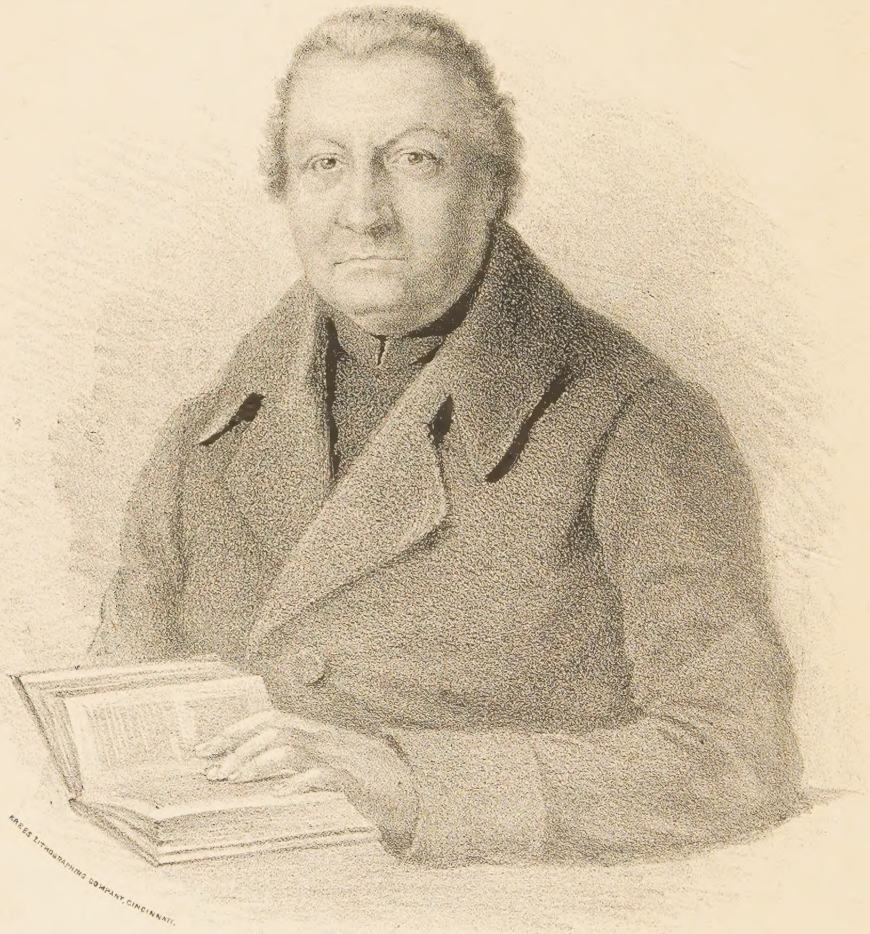

REV. CHARLES NERINCKX.

THE LIFE

OF

Rev. Charles Nerinckx:

WITH A CHAPTER ON THE

EARLY CATHOLIC MISSIONS OF KENTUCKY;

COPIOUS NOTES ON THE PROGRESS OF CATHOLICITY
IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
FROM 1800 TO 1825;

AN ACCOUNT OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SOCIETY OF
JESUS IN MISSOURI;

AND

AN HISTORICAL SKETCH

OF THE SISTERHOOD OF LORETTO IN KENTUCKY, MISSOURI,
NEW MEXICO, ETC.

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REV. CAMILLUS P. MAES,
Priest of the Diocese of Detroit.

"In journeys often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from my own nation, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils from false brethren; in labour and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in many fastings, in cold and nakedness; besides those things that are without; my daily instance, the solicitude of all the churches."—2 Corinth, xi: 26, 27, 28.

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TO

The Friends of Mary at the Foot of the Cross,

WHOSE VENERATION

FOR THE BLESSED MEMORY OF

THEIR SAINTLY FOUNDER

AND

FAITHFUL PRESERVATION

OF HIS SPIRIT OF SELF-DENIAL,

ARE A

GUARANTEE OF LONG-CONTINUED USEFULNESS,

This Volume is respectfully Dedicated by

THE AUTHOR.

Imprimatur.

✠ CASPAR HENRY BORGESS,

BISHOP OF DETROIT.

DETROIT, MICH., *July* 12, 1879.

PREFACE.

When the Loretto Sisters were told by the Right Rev. P. J. Lavialle, D. D., of Louisville, to jealously treasure every scrap of paper relating to their venerable founder, the Bishop assuring them that, within a few years, every available document would be hunted up to write his life, they little thought that this their fondest hope would be realized so soon. Almost half a century had elapsed since Father Nerinckx had crowned his many labors by a most precious death; and his memory was so well nigh obliterated outside the homes of his spiritual children, that they could hardly credit the gratifying prediction.

The reader will judge for himself whether I was right in rescuing the memory of the Rev. Charles Nerinckx from comparative oblivion.

I had not the remotest idea of writing his life, until, having applied to a reverend gentleman for some documents in his possession, with the intention of embodying them in a short sketch of the life and works of Father Nerinckx for a magazine, I was told he could not part with them, unless I pledged myself to publish a biography of the founder of Loretto. Fully aware of my inability to do justice to the subject, and considering that more sacred duties allowed me to devote to the work but a few hours through

the week, I very reluctantly complied with his request. If I have not fulfilled the task to the satisfaction of the public, I have at least the merit of having added another leaf to the glorious annals of the Catholic Church in these United States, and of having called the attention of more able scholars to an illustrious name in the galaxy of pioneer missionaries whom the New World owes to the persecution of the priesthood in France and Belgium, during the revolutionary period of 1793.

At first writing, many misgivings natural to literary infancy, and increased not a little by necessary translations from the Latin, Flemish, and French, halted me at every step. Besides, many gaps, filled, in some instances, only two and three years later, occurred in the narrative of events. I was continually cramped in its redaction, by lack of trustworthy information. This necessitated lengthy and often sterile researches, on rubbish-covered by-paths in the almost untrodden historical field of the end of the last and the beginning of the present century. Stray ends of information, gathered in out of the way places, have thus, at odd times, been knotted together in one unbroken skein of disentangled strands. Hence, the reader must not always expect the uneven thread of my narrative to smoothly reel from the literary spindle.

The learned Archbishop Spalding has, it is true, eloquently embalmed Rev. Nerinckx' memory in the interesting pages of his "Sketches of Kentucky," and from them we have freely drawn. But we have succeeded in obtaining many valuable and hitherto unpublished documents, which enable us to give a fuller history of the venerable missionary's laborious career. It gives us, moreover, an opportunity of perpetuating the virtues and good deeds of his spritual children, "the Friends of Mary at the Foot of the

Cross," the self-sacrificing Sisterhood of Loretto, Ky., in the words of Bishop Flaget, "the most valuable legacy which good Mr. Nerinckx had left to his diocese."

We can vouch for the historical accuracy of the details of our narrative. We got them all at authentic sources, more especially from letters of Rev. Father Nerinckx, many of whose autographs the writer has in his possession. The few details we have about his ministry in Belgium, we partly glean from his own letters; partly from the *London Catholic Miscellany*, for April, 1825, which obtained its information from Rev. John H. Nerinckx, a brother of the missionary, living in London at that time.

From a Flemish narrative, edited by J. G. Lesage Ten Broek,* at Amsterdam, in 1819, and one of Father Nerinckx' letters, published by the same at 's Gravenshage in 1825, for the benefit of the American missions, we gleaned many incidents of travel, and some historical data not to be found elsewhere. A unique copy of both is now in the possession of

*Joachim George Le Sage Ten Broek, the noble champion of catholic interests in the Netherlands, was born of protestant parents, in Groninghen, November 27, 1775. He became a convert to the Catholic Church in 1806, and published, in 1815, his work on the "Grandeurs of the Roman Catholic Church." Three years later, he began the publication of the *Godsdienst Vriend*—"The Friend of Religion"—which he continued editing until 1824, when he became blind. This infirmity did not prevent him from assuming the control of the *Catholyke Nederlandsche Stemmen*—"Catholic Voices of the Netherlands," in 1835. Appreciating his services in the interests of religion, Gregory XVI. made him Chevalier of the Golden Spur in 1840. Mr. Le Sage died suddenly, but not unprepared, at Grave-on-the-Maas, July 11, 1847. For many years, he went to Holy Communion daily. His father and brother were protestant preachers. His efficient help in behalf of the American missions entitles him to a grateful remembrance in the prayers of our catholic people.

Mr. John Gilmary Shea, of New York, who kindly allowed us the use of them.

The records of the Hospital of Dendermonde, Belgium, and a lengthy Flemish circular, published in Ghent by Rev. Nerinckx, whilst on a visit to his native country in 1816, add not a little interest to the work.

A precious collection of manuscript letters, written by the venerable missionary to his parents and friends of Flanders, now in the library of the world-renowned Bollandist Fathers, Brussels, has proved a mine of wealth. Were it only for the pleasure and profit its perusal and use have given us, we would cease to regret the, to our interested friends, tardy publication of this biography.

To the Most Rev. J. Roosevelt Bayley, D. D., Archbishop of Baltimore, for personal exertions in culling Father Nerinckx' Latin manuscript letters from among the numberless documents of the Metropolitan Archives, and intrusting them to us for use, our acknowledgments are due. Little did we think, when promising him the early publication of the work in which he took a kindly interest, that so many obstacles would beset our way, and that his own name would have been added to the bright historical roll of the departed Fathers before our work would see the light.

Our thanks are especially tendered to the learned and worthy Father Walter H. Hill, S. J., of St. Louis University, whose encouraging words and efficien help have made him like unto a charitable Booz t the gleaning Ruth.

Any one acquainted with the veneration Loret entertains for its saintly founder, need not be tol that the good sisters have taxed alike old papers an the memory of the older members of the community

who knew him well, to add to the comparatively meager account of so useful a life as that of the Rev. Charles Nerinckx.

The mention of some supernatural occurrences obliges us also, in obedience to the decree of Pope Urban VIII., to declare that all that is related in this biography, and all the titles of respectful homage bestowed on the priest whom it honors, rest on no other authority but the testimony of men. That testimony is above suspicion, but it is not brought forward to forego in any way the judgment of the Church.

MONROE, MICH., *Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, June*, 1879.

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THE LIFE

OF

REVEREND CHARLES NERINCKX.

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1761–1793.

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CHARLES NERINCKX, born October 2, 1761, at Herffelingen, province of Brabant, Belgium, was the oldest of fourteen children. His father, Sebastian Nerinckx, a doctor of some note, belonged to one of those patriarchal families of the middle class, rich in faith and virtue, so numerous in Catholic Flanders. Shortly after he was admitted to the practice of his profession, he settled in Herffelingen; and, having found in Miss Petronilla Langendries the solid piety that bespoke the "valiant woman," whose praises are recorded on the blessed pages of Holy Writ, "his heart trusted in her," and he chose her for his wife.

After the birth of Charles, the first-born of this happy union, Mr. Nerinckx, who was ac-

quiring quite an enviable reputation as a skillful practitioner, resolved to extend the field of his usefulness. In 1762, he moved with his little family to Ninove, province of East-Flanders, where, besides the advantages which a city afforded to a man of his talents he found an opportunity of giving a good and solid education to his children.

Here, as in the rural village of Herffelingen, the pious couple lived secluded and without ostentation, distinguished, if at all, from their neighbors, more by the earnestness and priest-like zeal which the doctor brought to the discharge of his duties, and the unobtrusive piety and conscientious care with which the young mother governed her household, than by any exterior show. These sterling qualities of heart and soul they had inherited from their sires, the renowned burgesses of Flanders, so jealous of their rights and liberties, and so loyal to their God and Prince, who if they could not boast of ancient genealogies, or obtrude the blazon of ancestral escutcheons upon their fellow-citizens, took a legitimate and christian pride in having, for generations past, given zealous and devoted priests to the sanctuary, pious and self-sacrificing nuns to the cloister. Father Nerinckx mentions in his letters, an uncle a priest, an aunt a Benedictine nun, and Mother Constantia Langendries, his mother's sister, who was superior of the Hospital of St. Blase, Dendermonde,

which office she held for fourteen years, till 1823, the year of her death.

Nor did the young generation prove unfaithful to the pious traditions of the family. The Holy Ghost tells us that "the generation of the righteous shall be blessed;" and blessed indeed was the Nerinckx generation: blessed with the force of character and earnestness of will which made of the father the universally respected citizen and the self-sacrificing doctor; blessed with the deep and abiding religious feeling which made of the mother the pious and queenly matron, who "hath looked well on the paths of her house, hath not eaten her bread idle. Her children rose up and called her blessed," and so, no doubt, did the church and society which were benefited by their labors.

We may confidently assert that there are few families, even in Catholic Belgium, which can show so noble a record of religious vocations as the Nerinckx family exhibits. Besides Charles, the subject of this biography, we note the following:

Peter Joseph, the second eldest, born May 16, 1763, joined the Brothers of Charity, and died a member of that Congregation, June 17, 1796.

John Henry, born July 15, 1776, in Ninove, was only fifteen when he became a novice in the Capuchin Convent of Scherpenheuvel. He had not yet made his vows, when, in the name of a liberty they did not wish for, the religious of that house were thrown upon a cold and unfeel-

ing world by the agents of the French Directory, and left "free" to choose between the chains of a galley-slave and the wandering life of a "rebel" priest tracked by the *gens d'armes.* John lived for some time in quiet seclusion at the parsonage of his brother Charles, then pastor of Everberg-Meerbeke; and when, on the 21st of October, 1797, sickness prevented his brother from accompanying his parishioners on their annual pilgrimage to Our Lady of Scherpenheuvel, he thought he could take his place without incurring any additional risk. But the blood-hounds of the Revolution had not lost sight of him; they only waited for a plausible excuse to arrest him. The same night John Henry was incarcerated in the Treurenberg dungeon, near St. Gudule, Brussels. He then languished for a few months in the St. Maurice's prison, of Rochefort, France, and was sent in company with many priests to the penal colony of Cayenne, in April 1798. But the young man had an indomitable courage, and resolved to profit of the first opportunity to make good his escape. God favored his designs. After a year of incredible sufferings, he succeeded in eluding the vigilance of his keepers, reached the English colony of Berbis, and through the good offices of Mr. Bottenburg, its governor, secured passage on a frigate ready to sail for Liverpool, for himself and his six companions, the only survivors of thirty-four Belgian exiles. They landed at Liverpool on the 21st of August, 1799.

At the urgent request of many French and Belgian exiled priests who had found a refuge in London, Mr. Nerinckx and his companions went to the metropolis. Encouraged by the venerable Abbé Carron, and convinced from the extraordinary circumstances of his escape that he was where God wanted him, John Nerinckx resolved to devote his life to the Catholic cause in England. He was ordained a priest in the little chapel of Charlton street, Clarendon square, on the 10th of June, 1802, by Mgr. Godard de Belbœuf, the exiled Bishop of Avranches, and began his priestly career there as assistant priest to Father Carron. Together with the latter, he built the new church of St. Aloysius, Somerstown, consecrated in 1808, and remained sole pastor of this congregation when Father Carron returned to France, in 1814. Helped by his sister Mary Ann, he, in 1822, established schools, the direction of which he gave, in November, 1830, to Madame d'Houet, the foundress of the Society of Faithful Companions of Jesus, in France. He thus became the London founder of that religious community which has done so much for Catholic education in England.

Rev. John H. Nerinckx died in Somerstown, London, December 22, 1855, at the ripe old age of eighty-four years.*

*Cfr. "La chapelle Française à Londres. Précis historique sur ce Sanctuaire, mémorable par son origine, l'infortune de ses fondateurs, les personnages illustres qui l'ont fréquenté ou visité, etc. Vie de Mr. J. H. J. Nerinckx, instituteur des Fidèles Compagnes de Jésus en Angleterre; par G. F. de Grand Maison

Mary Catherine, born March 25, 1768, entered the abbey of Rosendael, in Mechlin, April 22, 1792.

Jane Constance, born May 21, 1770, became a religious in the abbey of Swyvergue, Dendermonde.

Mary Ann, born October 19, 1773, belonged to the same Order of Citeaux, when all three were forcibly ejected from their monasteries by the Revolution. Mary Ann joined her brother John in London, in 1817, and helped him in the foundation and management of his schools and orphan asylum, until 1830. Fearful lest her presence among the children, who were very much attached to her, might interfere with the success of the new teachers, she withdrew from the school when the sisters took it in charge, and subsequently returned to Belgium. God rewarded this touching self-abnegation, and at the age of 59 she was received as a novice in the convent of the Sacred Heart, Hoegaerden, in 1832. She made her profession the next year, and devoted herself almost exclusively to the instruction of the children of the poorer classes, till the time of her death, July 21, 1840.

The mother of the Rev. F. X. Decoen, S. J., a priest on the American mission, was a sister of Father Nerinckx. Rev. Decoen came to America in 1843, joined the Society of Jesus, laid the

y Bruno. 2me edit. Londres: Burns and Lambert, 17 Portman street; Paris: Lecoffre & Compagnie, rue du vieux Colombier, 29—1863." pp. 221. Illustrated.

foundations of St. Gall's congregation and church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, some twenty years ago, and died on the 17th day of July, 1864, at St. Mary's Pottowatomie Mission, Kansas, whilst there on a visit from Leavenworth City, his abode.

Besides Father Nerinckx' aunt who became superior of the Hospital of Dendermonde, three of his first cousins, daughters of Mr. Albert Nerinckx, of St. Martin's-Lenneck, in Flanders, became religious in the same monastery; and, even to this day, the name of Nerinckx is a common one among the clergy of the Archdiocese of Mechlin.

Owing to the generosity of the Catholics, educational establishments were numerous in Belgium, previous to the brutal French Revolution, which subverted science as well as morality and religion. Having received the first rudiments of elementary education at home, Charles Nerinckx was sent to the college of Enghien, in the province of Hainaut, a city within ten miles of Ninove. Thence he went, in 1774, to Gheel, in the Kempen, where he pursued his Latin studies at the college of that place; and, after having completed his course of philosophy at the famous Catholic University of Louvain, to the satisfaction of his professors and his own credit, he determined to study for the Church. The fact of his being born in the Archdiocese of Mechlin, together with the influence of college associations, made him select the Archdiocese, in preference

to the Diocese of Ghent within the jurisdiction of which his parents lived, and he accordingly entered the theological Seminary of Mechlin in the fall of 1781.

Deeply impressed with the importance of the step he was about to take, Charles Nerinckx had meditated long and earnestly upon the responsible duties of the Catholic priesthood. To that sublime state he had aspired with all the longing desires of a God-loving heart; and his early fervor and extraordinary purity of soul, which he had known how to preserve amidst the many temptations of university life, had been a continual and most fit preparation for it. Satisfied as to the designs of Providence in his regard, he had made of himself a holocaust of propitiation to God, and looked forward with a holy ambition to the time when he would be wholly His in the work of the ministry. He longed with all the energy which faith in God and zeal for the salvation of souls could lend to an enlightened mind and an indomitable will, to counteract the growing indifference which the atheistic teachings of the French philosophers of the 17th and 18th centuries had fomented in his dear country.

In a very short time, the young levite became conspicious among his companions for virtue and studiousness, and he soon won the confidence and esteem of all his professors, more especially of Very Rev. Vandevelde, then President of the Metropolitan Seminary, and afterward Bishop of Ruremonde, who honored him in after-life

with an undying friendship. After the usual theological course of four years, during which the success attending his studies was as great as his life was holy and pure, young Nerinckx was ordained a priest towards the end of 1785; and, notwithstanding his profound humility which made him more solicitous to conceal his merits than to gain the good will of his superiors, he was appointed in 1786, Vicar of the Metropolitan parish of St. Rumoldus, Mechlin.* Here his zeal for the salvation of souls, and for the instruction of the poorer classes, whose interests are but too often neglected in the large cities because they are less prominent in the furtherance of the good works encouraged by the clergy, attracted upon him the attention of the venerable Prince John Henry Cardinal de Frankenbergh, the illustrious Archbishop of Mechlin.

Stimulated by the paternal encouragement of this Prelate who took a great interest in his modest labors, the young Vicar soon beheld his generous efforts crowned with abundant fruits. He felt amply repaid for his pains, when he witnessed the poor laborers, better instructed in their christian duties, and more satisfied with their lot, fill to overflowing the vast cathedral church where he dispensed to them, at early Mass, the Bread of life. Every Sunday he preached to them in earnest and simple words,

*Autograph letter of Father Nerinckx of November 20, 1803, to Bishop Carroll of Baltimore, in which he styles himself "Vicarius Secundarius," *i. e., second assistant priest.*

better adapted to the obtuse intellect of his hearers, than the flowing rhetorical efforts which, at that period, constituted the pulpit eloquence of the day, and to which, as he testifies in one of his letters, he never laid claim.

Though ably and zealously discharging the duties of this important position for eight years, Rev. Nerinckx fitted himself at the same time for further and more important conquests of souls, by an assiduous study of the master intellects in the domain of theology and canon law; whilst his austere habits of life, enabled him to give to meditation and prayer, the early hours of the day, without in the least impairing his robust health, sustained by an iron constitution that ignored exhaustion or weariness. Edifying the people by his extraordinary piety and austerity of life, he was at the same time gaining the respect of his elder brethren in the priesthood, whom his child-like simplicity caused him to venerate as fathers, by his profound knowledge of theology and his apt interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, with which his letters show him to have been very familiar. From the first his name was prominent among the most learned in the annual *Concursus* for promotion, regularly held in accordance with the recommendations of the Council of Trent; hence, no one was surprised, when, the pastorate of Everberg-Meerbeke having become vacant by the death of its incumbent, Rev. Charles Nerinckx was promoted to fill the vacancy, notwithstanding his comparative youth.

CHAPTER II.

1794–1801.

Pastor of Everberg-Meerbeke.—Catechism and Sunday Schools.—Reforms.—Father Nerinckx' proscription—Chaplain in the Hospital of Dendermonde.—His hiding-places.—He exposes his life to chastise a blasphemer.—His studies and writings.—Declines a re-appointment.

Father Nerinckx entered upon the duties of his new charge in 1794. The parish of Everberg-Meerbeke, situated midway between Brussels and Mechlin, in the province of Brabant, was in a sad state of disorder.

The rationalistic teachings of the last century had caused a singular falling off in the number of ecclesiastical vocations. Hence, men who in the common order of things, had a long-standing right to an honorable rest in their old age, were left in the ministry to administer, as best they could, to the spiritual wants of the people committed to their care. Having lost the necessary vigor of mind, and, for the greater part, afflicted with bodily infirmities, the natural consequences of old age, these poor priests often died broken-hearted, because unable to attend to their duties, and held responsible for the evils attending their unwilling neglect. The disastrous effects

of this state of affairs were soon apparent all over the land. People grew lukewarm in their religious duties; many lost the faith; and the nation was soon ripe for that stupendous French Revolution, true deluge of impiety and socialism, that astonished all but those who knew what inroads irreligion had made, and rendered every man in the land, either a horrified victim or a bloodthirsty criminal.

This was exactly the case in Everberg-Meerbeke. The old age of the late incumbent of the Meerbeke rectory, had long unfitted him for parochial duties. Hence, the church was dilapidated, and the spiritual wants of the parishioners were neglected; in fact, the deserted old ruin, void of worshipers, would have discouraged any but a young priest of Father Nerinckx' force of character and indomitable energy.

He at once went about his work of reform in good earnest, and in the right way. The children were the first to claim his attention; for he knew full well that to gain the love of the little ones, was to enlist the good will of their parents. The change of pastors rather pleased the parishioners, and Father Nerinckx profited of that first good impression, and of the curiosity of his people to see their new spiritual guide, to urge them strongly to send their children to church so that he might get acquainted with them. The interest manifested by the pastor in the welfare of their offspring, could not but flatter the parental pride of his flock; they brought them; and the

dear little people, shy at first at being forced into the presence of a priest—a being that many a one likely saw for the first time—were soon captivated by his engaging manners. The glowing accounts they brought home of the to them new enjoyments of religion, of the interesting little exercises of piety, of the edifying anecdotes related by their pastor, soon told on the grown people. This was a trait of character they had not looked for in the austere looking priest; and, as is always the case, they were bound to see for themselves.

Bedewed by the grace from on high, the simple yet earnest exhortations of Rev. Nerinckx soon worked a manifest change in his flock. Some youths of both sexes eagerly entered into the pastor's plans for improvement, and encouraged by his frequent visits, were but too happy to teach in the different districts into which he had divided his parish for the regular and convenient catechetical instruction of the children. This laudable ambition was increased when he obtained for those who devoted themselves to the good work, the indulgences granted by the Holy Father to the societies of christian instruction in Rome; and in a few years there was not a better instructed people in the Archdiocese, whilst the name of the pious pastor was mentioned with respect, not only in the neighboring country, but in the distant parishes of Brabant and Antwerp. Every Sunday and holiday, after Vespers, all the children would assemble in the

different sections of the parish, where a list of their names was carefully kept by the teacher, they were then taught sacred songs and canticles composed by Father Nerinckx in honor of the Child Jesus and of his Blessed Mother, and instructed in their catechism. The usual afternoon visit of the pastor was sufficient reason for the children never to be absent, since the least neglect was made the occasion of an inquiry as to the cause of it; and the prospect of a kind word, or perhaps a picture, was more than encouragement enough to apply themselves to the study of the lesson given them.

Such a course of thorough training could not but bear its desired salutary fruits. The children grew up "in age and wisdom before God and men," and their eagerness to assist at the Scriptural lessons brought many a hardened parent to come to the old dilapidated church, where the good conduct of the little ones edified the most skeptical, and moved them to imitate their piety. The parish of Everberg-Meerbeke, which, a few years before, had been pointed at as a perfect Bedlam of disorder and irreligion, became a model for imitation to all, so anxious had its inhabitants become to correspond with the pious endeavors of the pastor for their conversion. They went regularly to the holy Sacraments, and lived a practical christian life.

The spirit of lively faith being revived in his parishioners, Father Nerinckx had no difficulty in making them understand the necessity of re-

pairing their house of worship in a manner befitting the presence of the God who dwelt therein. Thanks to their generous contributions, he was soon enabled to remodel the old church to the full extent of his love for the glory of the house of God.

Nor did his zeal stop there. He was aiming at a thorough reformation of his parish, and sought to have his flock practice in their daily lives at home, what he taught them in the church With true pastoral vigilance, the virtuous priest often went the rounds of his congregation; and, although he never entered the house of any one unless called to administer to the spiritual wants of its inmates, he abolished, in a great measure, the promiscuous dances, which but too often led to excesses and to a laxity of morals unbecoming a Catholic people. Processions in honor of the Blessed Sacrament and of the Blessed Virgin fostered the public devotion and its unrestrained exterior expression; whilst confraternities and pious associations for visiting the sick, praying for the dead, etc., enabled all to perform works of christian charity, and to progress in virtue by mutual good example.

As a natural consequence, the atheistic teachings of the French revolutionists, whose armies had recently invaded Belgium and were everywhere spreading the irreligious spirit of their so-called government, found little favor in the now thoroughly Catholic village of Everberg-Meerbeke. The pious priest became, therefore, a

special object of suspicion to the revolutionary rulers of the French Republic. But he heeded them not. Notwithstanding severe prohibitory laws, he fearlessly fulfilled the duties of his pastoral office, until, having said mass and publicly assisted at a funeral service without previously taking the blasphemous oath of undying hatred to royalty, required of all priests who wished to retain their position, an order issued for his arrest, in 1797, put an untimely end to his noble work in the third year of his administration.* However, Father Nerinckx was living in the hearts of his parishioners; one and all were more anxious for his safety than for their own. They gave him timely warning to elude the officers sent to arrest him, and enabled him to avoid the fate which befel his brother John and so many of his brethren in the ministry.

Disguised in the shabby dress of a peasant, Father Nerinckx fled by unfrequented paths, traveling in the dead of night, and safely reached the city of Dendermonde, the 6th of August, 1797. He there secreted himself in the Hospital of St. Blase, which was under the charge of twelve hospitalier nuns, among whom was his aunt, Mother Constantia Langendries.

The chaplain of this institution had been arrested a few weeks previous, by the emissaries of the revolution, and exiled to the penal colony of the Isle of Rhé, his old age disabling him for the more active duties which these blood-hounds re-

* Letter to Archbishop Carroll. *Sup. Cit.*

quired of the younger ecclesiastics, whom they forced to bear arms and to undergo the cruel vigils of garrison life in Wezel and other Upper-Rhine fortresses. Spared from the general persecution because of the utilitarian character of their institute, but left without a guide in the painful discharge of their duties, and deprived of the spiritual consolations which alone sustain religious in their works of heroic charity, the poor nuns received Father Nerinckx like an angel sent from Heaven to minister unto them and uphold their drooping spirits. They found an occasion of apprising the noble martyr, De Broglie, Bishop of Ghent, of the arrival of the persecuted priest in their midst, and he not only gave leave, but requested Father Nerinckx most urgently, to attend to the spiritual wants of the community and of the many sick intrusted to their care.

Satisfied again that he was where God wanted him, and resolved to await the result of the impious warfare which the powers of Hell were waging against the faith in the land of his birth, Father Nerinckx set to work with his habitual energy, and his ministrations bore abundant fruits. The fervid piety that was manifest in all his actions, and his entire resignation to the holy will of God, were a great encouragement to the nuns in the midst of the dangers with which they were surrounded, and animated them in the discharge of their often loathsome duties. Not satisfied with leading the members of the

pious community to a high degree of perfection, by practical instructions and salutary example, he faithfully attended the sick and wounded who crowded the infirmary hall of the hospital. He usually spent the whole night in consoling the sufferers and bringing the last Sacraments in good time to those who were in danger of death, and then devoutly prepared for the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which he said at two o'clock in the morning, for the community. After a lengthy thanksgiving, he would visit in their cells, the wounded prisoners of the revolutionary battles shut up in the hospital, and assuage their bodily sufferings whilst imparting to them spiritual succor. At that dead hour of night, the heroic priest brought the holy sacraments to these unfortunate victims of war, who were to be hurried to execution the same morning, and refreshed them with the happy assurance that, when they were led to a horrible and unmerited death, he would be at the window of his place of concealment to impart to them once more sacramental absolution. Loaded with chains, like murderers, hurried along the streets by the howls of an infuriated mob and the butt-ends of soldiers' guns, the poor fellows would cast a furtive glance to where they knew Father Nerinckx was watching them with an encouraging nod and uplifted hand, and bow their heads in sign of contrition and gratitude, whilst the consoling words of forgiveness were silently wafting over the heads of the clamoring crowd and bringing

peace and heavenly happiness to their heavy hearts, with the sign of the Cross. Father Nerinckx often referred in later years to the sufferings of these poor men, with the greatest feelings of commiseration. One especially had excited his compassion; when, passing through the streets on his way to execution, the wretch lifted with one hand the maimed stump of the other, which had been cut off by the bloody soldiery and left for several days to be eaten away by gangrene, raising at the same time his eyes to Heaven with an imploring look for strength and mercy.

Often too, during that reign of terror, and at the imminent peril of his life, Father Nerinckx visited, by stealth, his abandoned parish of Meerbeke, administering the Sacraments to the dear people who had called for him, consoling them in their sufferings and strengthening them in the hour of danger. Sometimes, however, his ardent charity led him to tarry too long, and spied by traitors, he would have to hurry through the night to his place of concealment, which he always succeeded in reaching before the detectives could get on his track.

The nuns had, moreover, taken every imaginable precaution to conceal his presence in the hospital. The priest usually occupied a room in the upper story, to which he retired before the dawn of day, to take some rest after his nocturnal labors. Here he also remained during the day, passing the time in writing spiritual exercises and the study of theology and Holy Writ;

and when some unusual noise reached his ear, or a sister advised him of unwonted danger, a common-looking clothes-press, built against a hollow wall, and communicating with it, afforded him easy access to the garret, where a recess, cunningly devised between two walls, concealed him effectually from view.

On rare occasions, when the sisters, who, owing to the duties of the hospital service, had a chance to communicate with the outer world, and hear what was going on, thought that there was no danger ahead, the chaplain would take a walk in the hospital grounds, but always in disguise. Here also he had a place of concealment, unknown to the domestics of the house; and, at the least sign of alarm, he retired to a dismal looking hen-coop in the farm-yard, in which the practiced eye of the shrewdest of detectives would have failed to discover the narrow little hiding-place which the devoted sisters had provided for his safety.

However, Father Nerinckx trusted much more in Providence than in any means which human ingenuity could devise for his safeguard. The noble words which later became so familiar to the destitute sisters of the primitive Sisterhood of Loretto, and which the now flourishing mother-house of the same name treasures as a heirloom, transmitting it to the continually multiplying communities of the society, were already, at that time, the ruling axiom that influenced all his actions: "Do not forsake Providence and He

will never forsake you!" And when the honor of God or the good of his neighbor demanded it, the undaunted priest exposed himself to what worldly people would call the most unnecessary dangers. One instance will suffice to illustrate that so well-known trait of Father Nerinckx' indomitable character. It was related to us by the Superior of the hospital nuns of Dendermonde, who faithfully transmit, as traditions of the house, every little incident of these seven years which Mother Constantia's nephew passed among their sisters.

Owing to some sudden danger of detection whilst he was walking in the garden, Father Nerinckx had secreted himself in the hen-coop, where he could hear all that was going on around him, without being seen. He had been there some time, and the servants, who were wholly ignorant of his hiding-place, were working in the farm-yard, when an altercation arose between two of them, and, in the heat of the discussion, one of the men cursed the Holy Name of God. The priest did not hesitate a moment; the words were scarcely fallen from the lips of the offender, when out he came, to the amazement and dismay of the domestics, and having administered a severe rebuke to the guilty one, and expatiated on the great offense which he gave to God by using such language, he told the man to go to the Superior, ask for the wages due him, and depart. So great a horror had he for sin, that he exposed himself to almost certain death rather than al-

low a man to blaspheme God's name and go unpunished. The man could have followed the promptings of his revengeful anger and betrayed him to the authorities; but Father Nerinckx never stopped to think of the risk he incurred; he did his duty, and trusted in a kindly Providence to protect him, and his confidence was never vain; for although many a time in imminent peril of his life, he always succeeded in escaping the vigilance of the police.

Whilst comparatively overburdened with night work, Father Nerinckx could hardly attend to any priestly duty during the day, owing to the continually increasing danger of his being arrested, the *gens d'armes* knowing his place of concealment, and making frequent and unexpected visits to the hospital. But he was far from being idle. After the short rest he allowed his fatigued body from the laborious duties of the sick room, he spent the day in writing and in religious exercises. Nor were his studies and prayers fruitless for others. "Some idea may be formed of his close application, when it is stated that the manuscripts now in existence, which he wrote while in this retreat, would, if printed, form about eight or ten octavo volumes; they are composed in Latin, in which he excelled, and contain treasures upon theology, the morals, discipline, and the history of the church. His friends have since frequently pressed him to publish them, that the world might be benefited by his learning and researches, but upon

this point he was always deaf to their entreaties."* The results of his labors would surely have been given to the world, for the enlightenment of studious minds and the edification of pious souls, had the religious and zealous care, with which his spiritual children of Loretto guarded that precious legacy of their venerable Founder, been sufficient to rescue his books and papers from an act of vandalism, which it will be our painful but conscientious duty as an historian, to record in the course of this biography. The only writings saved from destruction are a little *Treatise on Missionaries* and an exposition of the *Reign of Satan*, edited by a Dominican priest, from notes left by Father Nerinckx, and usually bound in with the rather extravagant pamphlet about the Coming of Antichrist, which the Friar Preacher inflicted on his friends.† They are written in a masterly Latin style which but few modern authors have equaled. The beautiful Latin letters which the venerable missionary wrote to Archbishop Carroll, and now in the archives of Baltimore, are ample proof of his ability in that respect, and bear testimony to the fact that he possessed the Holy Scriptures so thoroughly, as to assimilate them at every

* London Catholic Miscellany, April, 1825.

† Cfr. "Armatura Dei in periculosis ac calamitosis praesertim hisce temporibus accipienda; juxta Rev. Adm. Dom. C. Nerinckx, Missionarii celeberrimi notas;" pgg. 72, and "Armatura Dei adversus diaboli insidias," pgg. 36, printed in Mechlin, 1844; edited by A. F. Vandewyer, M. D., and later, O. P., who resided in Pittsburgh, in 1836.

line with his own writing. His letters read like St. Bernard's famous epistles, and some of them are perfect literary as well as spiritual gems.

Father Nerinckx had now acted as chaplain to the hospital for four years, during all of which time he carried his life in his hands, bearing his persecutions with entire resignation to the holy will of God, and edifying all by the practice of every virtue, when in 1801, "things having apparently changed, new bishops came from France, and a new apportionment of parishes was made. I was nominated pastor of my old place," he writes, "but I refused the appointment, because I was first asked to comply with certain conditions, which I looked upon as suspicious and unsound, and which a great many other priests felt they could not in conscience comply with. As a result, I am now free from all pastoral care, and pass my time, not idly, indeed, but less occupied than I wish to be, unless God orders otherwise." *

The clause which the pious priest objected to, was, very likely, the oath of allegiance to the new government, which newly appointed pastors had to take before a delegate of the First Consul. Although accepted, or rather tolerated, by his Holiness Pius VII, in the Concordat of 1801, in consideration of other clauses favorable to religion, that oath had been looked upon with suspicion by those faithful priests who refused to take

* Letter of Rev. Nerinckx to Bishop Carroll of Baltimore, dated November 20, 1803. Baltimore. MSS.

the former unlawful oath of 1797, by which they were to swear undying hatred to royalty. The Republic was, in their thoughts, connected with the overthrow of the Catholic Faith; and surely, they could not be blamed for refusing to perform an act, the lawfulness of which they had grave reasons to doubt, so long as the formal acceptance of it by the Holy See was not made known to them through a trustworthy channel. Father Nerinckx wrote, therefore, to the new Archbishop of Mechlin, thanking him for the profered promotion, and, at the same time, respectfully exposing his reasons for not accepting it. The Prelate seems to have respected his conscientious scruples, and left him free to go whereever his zeal might suggest, for he appointed another priest in his stead.*

*Cfr. Letter of Rev. Nerinckx to Archbishop Carroll of November, 1803.

CHAPTER III.

1801–1804.

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.—FATHER NERINCKX RESOLVES TO GO TO THE AMERICAN MISSIONS.—AN ACCOUNT OF HIS VOCATION.—PRINCESS GALLITZIN RECOMMENDS HIM TO BISHOP CARROLL.—SHE MEETS HIM IN AMSTERDAM.—ANNOYING DELAY.—FATHER NERINCKX EMBARKS FOR AMERICA.—A FLOATING HELL.

RELIGIOUS persecution had now lasted eight years. Direful for France and its conquered provinces was the tempest which had broken forth in 1793, with all the seething fury which thirty years of ill-concealed agitation, despairingly kept down with the powerless grasp of a dying government, had lent to the hideous monster of the Revolution. The declaration of the rights of man became its code of morals, murder and pillage its civil law; and the climax of anarchy was reached, when a blood-thirsty mob piled the tottering frame of a communistic republic upon the gored remains of the once glorious royalty of *la belle France*. Louis XVI, its too good-natured monarch, the enfeebled personification of ten centuries of Bourbon and Capetian glory, carried with him to the scaffold the noble memories of the most christian people. With

the mangled corpse of the nation's murdered king, the Revolution buried the catholic annals of the *Gesta Dei per Francos*,* so nobly begun by Clodwig on the plains of Tolbiac, and so successfully continued by his successors.

And, as the sturdy oak, tottering under the repeated blows of the treacherous ax, crushes in its fall the vigorous saplings thriving under the protecting shade of its leafy crown, so the old royalty of France carried with it in its ruin the noble chevaliers who owed to the king their luster, wealth and titles, and whose fathers had stood by the throne, ever ready to defend it with their swords or protect it with their shields. The most noble houses of France were shaken to their very foundations; their scions were exiled or decapitated, and the blasphemous wish of the ribald Voltaire was well nigh carried out: "the last nobleman hung with the entrails of the last of catholic priests."

For the catholic priest was always and everywhere identified with the party of order. Slander and bigotry may delight in misrepresenting him in the eyes of the people, and call him the enemy of the State; but, when aiming at the subversion of a government, the lawless rioters know full well that the priesthood is the main bulwark of society, and their first blows are directed against it. Nor was the case altered in this particular instance; clergymen were persecuted and hunted down with ferocious and dog-

*God's works are done by the Franks.

ged tenacity. Churches and sanctuaries desecrated, altars leveled with the ground, convents and monasteries pillaged and sacked; such were the sad sights which, amid the smoking ruins of medieval castles and more humble hamlets, proclaimed to the world the shame of France, and the fate that awaited countries, which, like Belgium, had to curb their neck under the iron heel of the murderous French Directory.

Thousands of priests were massacred or imprisoned; and such as succeeded in making good their escape, deemed themselves happy to forego, by a voluntary exile from their native land, the dreaded transportation to the penal colonies. And so, the loss of France and Belgium became America's gain. To the dreadful calamities of the church in these countries, we owe a Flaget, a David, a Bruté, a Dubourg, the saintly Bishops and Patriarchs of the young American Church, and the pioneers of christian civilization in the West. To the persecution of the Catholic Church in the Old World, we are indebted for a Gallitzin, a Richard, a Badin, a Nerinckx, and so many others, who, if not clothed with the purple, because of their humility, would have honored it by their virtues, and who increased the sphere of their usefulness by remaining in the comparatively humble position of the missionary priest, in the beginning of this century.

Surrounded by continual perils, and unable to foresee how long this religious subversion would

last, Father Nerinckx began to think seriously of devoting himself to the missions, about the year 1800.

In his mind, there was no vocation as sublime as the one of the Apostolic ministry; and being so very humble that he called himself "a miserable sinner utterly incompetent for the missions," he hardly dared to think that he was called to that hard but glorious office. Yet his burning zeal for the salvation of souls led him to consult friends, and weigh their advice, whilst he earnestly considered before God the qualities requisite for that sublime calling, and sought to find out the designs of Providence concerning his future life. It was during that time he wrote his little treatise, "*De missionariis selecta quaedam*," above referred to.

"My intention at that time," he writes, "was to go to any place, even among the Indians, where it was thought I could do some good. Monseigneur Ciamberlani, the Nuncio of the Pope, had offered me to go to his mission, the Cape of Good Hope; but he wanted me to have a companion of our language, which I had not." He may also have thought of joining the Rev. Mr. Carron and his own brother in London; and foreseeing that sooner or later he would go on the mission, "because forced to acknowledge that God favored his wishes better than he ever dared to expect," * he applied to the Very Rev. DeLandtsheere, Vicar-general of Mechlin, then in prison,

* Letter of Rev. C. Nerinckx, of 1811.

for testimonial letters, which the confessor of the faith willingly granted, September 20, 1801, and authenticated with the archiepiscopal seal.

Whilst undecided where God wanted him, he heard, in 1802, of a letter said to have been written by Rev. Stanislaus Cersonmont to his half-brother, Rev. Gouppi, secretary to the Prince Bishop of Liege. One of his friends, aware of his intention, procured him a copy of the letter, dated July 20, 1801, at Conewago, in the Diocese of Baltimore, where the presumed writer was stationed as a missionary priest. The letter was neither genuine nor accurate, as Rev. Nerinckx found out later, but it exposed a true want of missionary priests, and it prompted him to select the American mission in preference to any other. The reasons for his choice are forcibly set forth in the following letter, addressed to a former friend, and dated

"Holy Mary's at the Rolling Fork.
"*January* 23, 1806.

"*Reverend and dear Friend:*

"Not to be wanting to our intimate friendship, nor deserve the reproach of delay, or even of negligence, in so important a cause as the honor of God, the propagation of the faith, the salvation of our neighbor and of our own soul, I can not help writing letter upon letter to call with loud cries, vigorous laborers to one of the most plentiful harvests, and seek in every direction whatever is needed to labor there. We agreed, when we

last said farewell, to employ all our zeal to succor, in person, our brethren in America, who suffer and die of spiritual hunger; and, till that end is obtained, to endeavor to secure the concurrence of men better fitted than ourselves in word and prayer. Let us keep our word. Let us not lose courage, although our first attempts have not answered our expectations. Persuade the good whom you find; send the generous men whom you may convince. The plan to be adopted, and the means to be used, were suggested in my letters last year. You have, doubtless, received them. If the motives and reasons which induced me to undertake this voyage can persuade others to follow, you may submit to them the following.

"In accordance with the parable of the Gospel, 'I first sat down and reckoned the charges that were necessary,' counting my resources with the utmost circumspection; and after repeated meditations on the subject, I found the following motives for setting out:

"1. The danger of my own defection from the faith, either by being perverted or by falling into error, if I remained at home; and the almost utter uselessness of my presence in Belgium in the actual state of affairs.

"2. The not unreasonable hope of promoting the honor of God under this severe menace: 'Woe to me if I have not preached the Gospel.'

"3. The inclination of the American people

toward the catholic religion, and the want of priests.

"4. The urgent opportunity of paying my evangelical debt of ten thousand talents. A dignified sinner in my own land which abounds in advantages, I almost despaired of doing real penance and making due satisfaction. Hence I concluded that I had to undertake unavoidable toils and sorrows.

"5. The favorable advice of competent persons, without whose counsel I did not deem it prudent to act.

"Such were the principal motives of my resolution, and they were strengthened by the following thoughts well suited to spur me on:

"*First.* The necessity, especially for his ministers, of a lively and abiding faith in God. The objects of this faith were: 1. The greatness and majesty of God, his domain over, and right to, our ministry, and our duty to serve him everywhere. 'I am thy servant and the son of thy handmaid. All serve thee; how shall I not serve thee?' I also considered the quite incomprehensible honor with which he has deigned to clothe us by introducing us into the holy of holies, and by ranking us with the princes of his people; an honor which God surely did not confer upon us to let us stand idle. 2. The labors, sweat, and sorrows of Jesus, our master, in every way so worthy of love, and of his disciples, with whose sufferings we are acquainted. 3. Soldiers of earthly kings serve them without

choice, and are forced to serve them for a ration of bread and water; and what trials do they not meet with, under how many forms do they not face death without any remuneration? Can it then seem equitable for us to shrink under any pretext whatever from the sweet yoke or service of the Lord, who holds out to us so great a recompense? 4. True, there are the dangers of the sea; but merchants expose to the same or greater dangers their money, their goods, their bodies, their souls, their families; and yet when they are broken down and exhausted by labors, they still find themselves empty-handed.

"*Second.* A firm hope of securing an eternal reward for ourselves, and of procuring it to so many others whom we will perhaps lead back from the ways of error; hence the hope of increasing thereby God's glory, and of obtaining from Him, who is our stay and support, reasonable aid. The horror of eternal pains, which, according to the judgment already written, await the wicked and slothful servant, and will torture him forever.

"*Third.* A burning zeal for the salvation of souls, with the assurance of God's help, the protection of the Blessed Virgin, etc. St. Ignatius preferred to live in the uncertainty of his own salvation and labor for his neighbor's soul, than to die at once with the certainty of being saved. Aided by these and kindred thoughts, I felt arising in me that fortitude which enabled me to

say, when the storm of objections arose, 'What I have resolved, I have resolved.'

"The objections which I successively answered, and my replies to them, were the following:

"*First objection.* You must have a vocation.

"*Reply.* 1. But it need not be confirmed by miracles. 2. I am a priest, and it is rather late to raise doubts as to my vocation. Better examine a vocation before ordination, than hesitate after being initiated into the holy ministry. To be a parish priest, with care of souls, in Belgium, requires a divine vocation just as well. Comforts of life, affection for parents, love of home, or a clinging to one's native soil or house, through puerile attachment, do not supply a surer testimony in the choice of a state of life. We have rarely heard the excuse of want of vocation alleged when there was question of accepting a parish. When a rich benefice is vacant, powerful motives are needed, not to induce most men to accept, but on the contrary to prevent men from seizing it. When you can get an advantageous position, you find a vocation readily; but when there is question of going to undertake labors abroad, vocation is doubtful! Moreover, the vocation is not wanting to him who is called; but, now and then, the one called is unfaithful to his vocation.

"*Second objection.* The faithful in Belgium also require our help.

"*Reply.* Only those who choose to stand in

need of help, suffer for the want of it; those who choose to look for it, can easily find it. At least, there is certainly more need of our presence in America, where there are not two priests to a league, aye, where there is not a priest to be found within a hundred miles, whilst the Catholics multiply in numbers, and the Word sown there produces fruit a hundred fold—that Word, now so unpalatable to most Belgians.

"*Third objection.* The people will perhaps say, 'If all the good priests go, what will become of us?'

"*Reply.* Who are you, who suffer yourself to be called good? Only trust in your vocation, expecting all from God's goodness. And even so, neither should the wicked, who neglect serious amendment, leave their country to go to fields ripe for the harvest; nor will all the good ones go. But if, by a just judgment of God, all the good ones did go, He is the Master—let Him do what is good in His sight. But, in the meantime, what evil hast thou prevented in thy own country? What errors hast thou opposed? What corruptions hast thou extirpated? What violations of the law of God hast thou not consented to? etc., etc. Weep, then, over thyself, and take pity on thy own soul. If apostolic men had remained in their own country—and their number was small enough—we should not have been christians to-day. Should we then not pity our brethren?

"*Fourth objection.* We need means, money, aptitude.

"*Reply.* As to means and aptitude, the judgment must be left to prudent men, who do not belong to your family; and who, although not bound to do the same, are not over-partial to those who are interested in the matter. As to money, God will provide it, my son.

"*Fifth objection.* Our parents, who need help or consolation, will be afflicted.

"*Reply.* Remember that the priest belongs to the Lord, and not to his own father. Assist your parents as much as you can, and provide for the future; but remember, too, that you must be about your heavenly Father's business. As to the precept of leaving father and mother for God's sake, examine the Scriptures, the acts and lives of the Apostles, and the examples of the Saints.

"You see then, dear friend, what induced me to undertake this journey. I have never yet repented coming; and, if any one of these motives can be useful to another, I willingly permit him to adopt them, and confirm them by new and better ones. There are, doubtless, many stronger and more cogent reasons. But, as those I have set forth suffice for me, who am so obtuse, and whose heart is so slow and perverse, I do not see why I should insist further.

"I commend myself earnestly to your prayers,

your holy sacrifices and other pious works, and subscribe myself,

"Your very devoted servant,

"C. NERINCKX,

"*Missionary in America.*"*

Having succeeded in obtaining an interview with his old and tried friend, Very Rev. Delandtsheere, November 16, 1803, Father Nerinckx laid his resolution before him, and the Vicar General heartily indorsed it, promising, at the same time, to write to Bishop Carroll, of Baltimore, in his behalf. However, the imprisoned priest was unable to fulfill his promise; for, on the nineteenth of the same month, he was hurried off to Paris by a brutal soldiery, there to be tried and convicted for his fidelity to God and to His representative on earth.

Rev. Nerinckx had hardly left the prison which he had visited in disguise, when suspicions about their visitor's real character induced the officers of the law to follow him in hot pursuit, not soon enough, however, to overtake him. Foreseeing the result of his bold adventure, Father Nerinckx got them off the track by retiring, for a few days, to his parents' home in Ninove, until the excitement would subside.

But he lost no time; from this new place of

*We can not vouch for the literal correctness of our translation, not having seen the original. It is based on the one given by Rev. Desmet, S. J., *Western Missions and Missionaries*, pgg. 452-57.

concealment, and without telling his family any thing about his intentions, he applied to Bishop Carroll, by letter of November 20, 1803, for admission to his diocese. He also secretly advised his friend, Mr. Peemans, a pious and estimable merchant of Brussels, of this step; a happy thought, inspired, no doubt, into our missionary by an ever-watchful Providence. For, the prelates to whom Rev. Nerinckx referred in his letter of application, as willing to testify to his character and good intentions, viz.: Cardinal de Frankenberg, Archbishop of Mechlin, and Bishop Vandevelde, of Ruremonde, were at that time unable to render him that kind office, being held in close confinement in the dungeons of the French Republic. Bishop Carroll might have had his misgivings about accepting a stranger among the priests of his diocese, under such unfavorable circumstances. But Mr. Peemans, being a pious catholic and a prominent man of the Belgian capital, corresponded with many distinguished persons attached to the persecuted faith, who were able and willing to do some good to proscribed priests. He accordingly wrote to Princess Gallitzin, whom he had frequently met during his stay in the Netherlands, and who, he knew, had a son, the renowned priest, Prince Demetrius Gallitzin, on the American mission. The following extract of a letter of the Princess to Bishop Carroll, dated *Munster*, 1803, tells the result:

"*My Lord Bishop:*

. . . . . "And now, Monseigneur, I have to speak to you about a subject almost as interesting to my heart as that which I just treated [viz., the welfare of her son]; it is the question of help for your dear mission, which my son and yourself, Monseigneur, deigned to ask of me for many years.

"I always did what was in my power, without being able to find any one whose honesty of purpose I could answer for, up to this time, when, by the mediation of a friend, a priest as noted for his science as for his virtue, I have found two men of great worth and entirely reliable: Mr. Nerinckx and one of his relations. The first, lately a *curé* in the Netherlands, is preparing to leave for Baltimore, having already studied some English, to render himself useful to the mission. He comes, highly recommended by two persons of the greatest merit: Monsieur de Venise, a priest, and Monsieur Peemans, a business man.

"Mr. Peemans, a valiant catholic, writes to me, as follows: 'Mr. Nerinckx was pastor under the old order of things, and would be so today, if he thought he could subscribe to all the government asks of him, without jeopardizing his soul. The Rev. de Venise, who knows him well, having studied with him in the Seminary of Mechlin, testifies that he is a first-class man; that when he was a *curé* he was truly the father

of every one of his parishioners; that his flock had such a veneration for his person that he controlled, so to say, every household. He was loved and cherished by all the children, whom he instructed and guided as a true missionary. As he can not remain idle, he made up his mind to go to Baltimore. He is studying English for that purpose; and as he may leave on short notice—since I have already made inquiries for a good stopping place in Amsterdam—I beg of you to send to Rev. Beckers, catholic priest in the Krytberg, on the Syngel, Amsterdam, the letters of recommendation to his Lordship of Baltimore, which you destined for him, as also your errands for that country. Mr. Nerinckx will be accompanied by one of his kinsmen, a pupil of Monsieur de Venise, who goes to America with the same sentiments. He would already have been a priest, if, when he was ready, our bishops had had the power of ordaining priests for this diocese. He will take with him his *exeat* and other papers necessary for that purpose, hoping that the Bishop of Baltimore will ordain him. . . . .'

"Considering such respectable testimonials, I could not, Monseigneur, hesitate to present you, Mr. Nerinckx, and that, with all the greater assurance, that if I knew him personally I would only have my own poor judgment as a guarrantee. . . .

"I must end my letter, not to run the

risk of not finding Mr. Nerinckx in Amsterdam.

"I remain, Monseigneur,

"Your most humble and obedient servant.

"PRINCESS GALLITZIN."*

After having given to Bishop Carroll all the details about himself and his family, narrated in our first chapter, Father Nerinckx, speaking of the spurious document attributed to Reverend Cersonmont, which specially urged the want of German priests in America, concludes as follows: "These letters, if genuine, ought to excite any priest who is free and who has the glory of God and the salvation of souls ever so little at heart, to come to you. And although entirely unworthy of so noble a mission, although not a German, and speaking French very inaccurately, I have determined to come to you, not, to seek promotion or comfort, which, generously profferred in my native land, I refused without regret; but that I may save my own soul, and work a little for the spiritual welfare of my neighbor, if my superiors deem proper. My secondary motive is to encourage others, more able than I am, and who, because of the sad state of religion in Belgium, have nothing to do, to come also to the missions, and there exercise their well-known zeal."†

*MSS. letter in the archiepiscopal archives of Baltimore, Md.

†Autograph Latin letter of Rev. Nerinckx to Bishop Carroll dated "Ninove, in Flanders, November 20, 1803."

Bishop Carroll received this letter May 31, 1804, and having subsequently received Princess Gallitzin's letter, he wrote to Father Nerinckx an answer—directed, at his request, to Mr. Provost, a rich Brussels merchant, Mey-boom street, No. 1067, in order not to set the blood-hounds of the Republic on his track—instructing him to come to America as soon as possible.

The priest's preparations were soon made. Having left the care of forwarding his luggage to the kind sisters of the hospital to which he had previously returned, he bade them a hasty farewell. On the morning of "the second day of July, 1804," he writes, "having left my parents and friends in ignorance, and without bidding them good-bye, I started from the Hospital of Dendermonde, where, being condemned to exile, I had remained unknown to the world."*

Father Nerinckx left on foot and without luggage, so as to avert suspicions, and not to give a scent to the *gens d'armes* always on the alert after him. Although all alone, and in constant danger of being arrested, he was in the best of humor, and arrived on the twelfth in Amsterdam, where he was met by Father Malavé, formerly pastor of Jodoigne, near Tirlemont.† A letter to his aunt, Mother Constantia, written on

*Autograph letter to Bishop Carroll, 1811. Baltimore Manuscripts.

†We find no further trace of Father Nerinckx' youthful kinsman above referred to.

the very day of his arrival in that city, tells us how he fared on the way:

"AMSTERDAM, *July* 12, 1804.

"*Dear Aunt Superioress and the whole Holy Community:*

"May God bless you all!

"Thanks be to the good God! I reached this city, in good health, to-day towards eight o'clock, A. M., after a journey of nine days on foot and forty-eight hours on the water. I was all alone on my travels, hence I could not quarrel with any body; I had companions on board the ship, but they were not of the best. We had a heavy wind, and made twenty-six leagues in ten hours, although the wind was no way favorable. I embarked at Breda, and sailed by Willemstad, Delft, Dordrecht, Rotterdam, Leyden and Haarlem, and saw very remarkable views on the way. Every where I wonder at the perfectly incredible cleanliness of the churches, especially of the catholic ones.

"I do not know when I will be able to continue my journey. I write this letter in all haste to let you know that I am safe, and hope to be able to write more details later. It may be, however, that we will not have to wait long here, for there are many occasions to sail. I hope you are all well, and that you remember me in your prayers, as I do you in mine, although they are poor prayers indeed. Greet Mr. D'haens (the director of the hospital), for me.

Be always very faithful to all your spiritual exercises, and, if possible, try to improve upon them; for your good will and zeal have to obtain your perseverance. Remember that the labor and sufferings are of short duration, and that the recompense is without end. If you think proper you can communicate this letter to my parents and friends, taking care, however, to explain to them, why I did not bid them farewell. As soon as I have made all necessary arrangements for my departure, I will write to them myself.

"I hope you have taken care of my trunks. If you write, address: Mr. Beckers op het Cingel in den Krytberg, Amsterdam;* and inside: for Mr. Nerinckx.

"God speed.

"C. NERINCKX."†

In the midst of all his dangers and secret negotiations for a speedy embarkation, he never forgets his mission; his interest in the spiritual welfare of others never flags, and he finds time to encourage the good hospital sisters in the prac-

*"The catholic worship was secretly practiced in Holland until the beginning of the present century. The churches in commercial cities were designated by names such as those which were usually given to warehouses and taverns. At Amsterdam, the catholic churches bore the titles of *Pool, het Haantje, de Papegaai, het Duifke, de Poost-Hoorn, de Krytberg, de Zaayer*, etc., instead of those of the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, St. Ann, St. Nicholas, etc." Life of Father Bernard, by Rev. P. Claessens, pg. 19.

†Autograph letter of Rev. Nerinckx, in the archives of the Dendermonde Hospital.

tice of their devotional exercises, and excite them to work perseveringly for the sanctification of their souls.

Forced to use the greatest precautions in preparing for his emigration to America, Father Nerinckx "suffered the most annoying delay of a whole month at an inn in Amsterdam."* Whilst there he had the good fortune of meeting the saintly Princess Gallitzin, who had come all the way from Munich to meet him. She intrusted to his care a box of goods and a letter for Prince Demetrius, her son, and favored him with the following letter for Bishop Carroll:

"AMSTERDAM, *July* 31, 1804.

"*Monseigneur*:

"As the precarious condition of our property does not permit me to pass the season, as usual, at the baths, and as my physician, moreover, finds it absolutely necessary for my health that I should make a carriage journey of, at least, ten or twelve days, I chose coming to Amsterdam to see and to speak with the missionaries, who are to have the honor of receiving your blessing, and are to see my dear son face to face . . .

"I have found, independently of Mr. Charles Nerinckx, whom I have already had the honor of announcing to you, in a letter dated at Munster, which, without doubt, has reached you long before this, Mr. François Malavé, another candidate perfectly recommended by all that

*Autograph of Rev. Nerinckx, 1811.

there is most pure in Brabant; he had come intending to accompany Mr. Nerinckx to Baltimore, to put himself under your orders, but it happened that the Jesuit Father Becker, *curé* here, authorized by the Father General, Gruber, to receive persons eligible for the Society, showed him a letter he had just received from the Father General, in which it was mentioned that you, Monseigneur, had presented thirteen of your missionaries for admission into the Society of Jesus. This letter, joined to the representations of Rev. Father Halnath, whom to name suffices to say all, and who, it may be remarked, in passing, had contributed no little toward attracting me here, determined Mr. Malavé to commence by passing several months at Duneburg, at the Jesuit novitiate, whence he begs you to have the goodness to reclaim him from the Superior General Gruber, as belonging to you, for he feels himself in the most special manner called to America, and only goes to Duneburg in order to make himself more capable of fulfilling your orders and intentions in whatever you may deign to use him.

"You will see in this, Monseigneur, what he has entreated me to say to you—he is not entirely decided himself how it will be—just as I am about leaving Amsterdam, where I have spent only three days, for and with the saintly personages who drew me here—I have not even an entire sheet of paper at hand, but I must still mention to you, Monseigneur, Mr. Charles Guny,

curé near Brabascon, who accompanies Mr. Nerinckx to Baltimore, undecided as yet whether he will there join the order of La Trappe, or whether God will call him to the missionary life, for which he now believes himself incapable: he has the same recommendations in his favor, and I do not think he will lose any thing in your estimation by his own opinion of himself.

"I venture to entreat you, Monseigneur, to write me a few words concerning these earnest men, who interest so many saintly souls here, and whom I hope you will like.

"I do not speak of the excellent news which Father Halnath brings us from St. Petersburg, whence he has just returned. The bearers of this letter will give you all the interesting details. God be blessed that His mercy deigns thus to repair the losses, which we have every day in the larger part of Europe, and to prepare us the missionaries, of which we shall soon have more need than the countries beyond the sea.

"I am with the most respectful attachment,

"Monseigneur,

"Your most humble and obedient servant,

"AUGUSTINE'S MOTHER."*

Father Nerinckx was greatly edified by the solid piety of the Princess, and had several conferences on spiritual subjects with her. Among other sayings of hers, he always remembered

* Life of D. A. Gallitzin, by S. M. Brownson, pgg. 154–6.

the seven spiritual pebbles of St. Teresa, by which to kill the Goliah of the world, which he sends to his aunt of Dendermonde, and which he doubtless often recalled in his instructions for the edification of his Loretto community. 1. Let nothing trouble you; 2. Let nothing frighten you; 3. Every thing passes away; 4. God alone is unchangable; 5. You will gain Him by patience; 6. Who has God, wants nothing; 7. God alone is sufficient.

Rev. Nerinckx finally succeeded in securing passage to America aboard an old, rickety ship, and with Father Charles Guny, a Benedictine priest, of Cambray, France, who afterward joined the Trappists, he embarked on the 14th of August, 1804, leaving Amsterdam the next day, feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.* The voyage lasted three months, "in the midst of various miseries, and dangers of all kinds;" the vessel was often in imminent danger of foundering at sea, and to add to the distress of our passengers, a contagious disease carried off forty-two of their number. Still, the crew was not chastened by the rod of affliction, and, the pious Father Nerinckx, speaking of the irreligion and immorality which reigned aboard this vessel, used to call it "a floating hell." He was wont to ascribe his preservation from shipwreck to a special interposition of Divine Providence.

"We arrived in Baltimore," he wrote in 1811,

* Autograph letters of Rev. Nerinckx of 1811 and 1824.

"the 14th of November, and were kindly received by Bishop Carroll. I remained a month in the maritime city of Baltimore; thence, I was sent to Georgetown, where I was entertained by the Right Rev. Leonard Neale with generous hospitality, in the College of the Jesuits, for a period of four months."

CHAPTER IV.

1804–1805.

Father Nerinckx appointed for Kentucky.—"Again a schoolboy" at Georgetown.—His humility.—Mademoiselle de la Rochefoucault and the French ambassador.—Visit of the Trappist prior.—Father Nerinckx prepares for his western mission.—His arrival in Kentucky.

Bishop Carroll received the exiles with open arms, and was not slow in discovering the intrinsic worth of the hardy Flemish priest. Father Nerinckx was forty-three years of age when he entered upon his missionary career; and he brought to it, with the experienced skill which twenty years of arduous ministry, spiritual direction and mental suffering had given him, all the fervor of youth. Of austere virtue, tempered with the sweetest charity, shining out of his rugged countenance; of an iron constitution and herculean strength; of the most profound humility, which thorough theological learning made all the more conspicuous; he was the very man whom the Bishop of Baltimore wanted for the abandoned mission of Kentucky, where Father Badin was roaming about in the most forlorn condition, and which no one else

wished, or was indeed willing, to accept. The "solicitude of all the churches" kept the Patriarch of the American Church in continual dread, lest even the most distant regions of his diocese should suffer for the want of priests. To supply them all with pious and zealous workmen, obtained from Catholic Europe, was the constant aim of his heroic endeavors; and in this the Prelate succeeded beyond all human expectations. Had he sent to the church of Kentucky no other missionary but Father Nerinckx, it would still have ample reason to be forever grateful to him. The rugged and austere priest was a real treasure to the poor and laborious Kentucky mission, and Bishop Carroll fully appreciated his worth. During the short acquaintance of one month, which he had with our missionary, he conceived a great esteem and veneration for his virtue, of which their frequent correspondence of later years gives ample proof. He never decided on any measure of importance bearing on the future usefulness of the western missions, without having previously consulted him, and he often followed his advice.

The abandoned state of the Kentucky mission, its hardships and poverty, were the strongest incentives which Bishop Carroll could throw in the way of Father Nerinckx, who eagerly accepted the proffered appointment. He joyfully sped to Georgetown College, whither the Prelate sent him to fit himself for his new duties, by acquiring a practical knowledge of the English lan-

guage, which he had been studying with no great facilities and very little success during the last two years of his forced retirement in Flanders. Being of a very buoyant disposition, he went at it with all the ardor of youth, and he playfully states, in a letter to his aunt of the Dendermonde hospital: "I am again a schoolboy, learning how to speak, read and write; no holidays; and it will take a long time before I can spell; of course, I pray for you: but, alas, I am even less proficient in spiritual matters than in the English language." In his humility, he soon began to doubt whether he had not presumed too much on his abilities; and a few days after his arrival at the college, December 7, 1804, he writes to Bishop Carroll to whom he had "confided his whole being and his temporal and spiritual welfare," a letter in which, after thanking the Prelate for having sent him to so good an institution where he was treated with the greatest kindness, he says: "With regard to the English language, if there is any hope of progress, I am afraid it will be little indeed; for, besides my own mediocrity, which is a great drawback, the professors have so much to attend to, that I do not dare to trouble them, when they have a little free time, for some rules of pronunciation, or ask them to correct me when reading. Left entirely to myself, I try to learn the best I can, and to recollect what I hear; but I am getting old, and want of early practice tells on me. I therefore earnestly beseech your

Lordship to judge with all the severity you deem proper and with your usual wisdom, whether there is any hope of my being of any use, and not to dread to tell me so, if you think there is none; for I have firmly resolved, if allowed, to consider you in all things as a tutor and a father . . ." Humble man! he who is to be such a worthy instrument for untold-of good in the hands of God, is afraid he is of no use!

The Poor Clares, living on Lafayette street, Georgetown, where they struggled against poverty and hunger by keeping school, having heard of the arrival of a new missionary, who, like themselves, had been driven from home by the horrors of the French Revolution, manifested to Bishop Neale, their ecclesiastical superior, a great desire of seeing Father Nerinckx. He, therefore, visited them, and in a letter to his aunt of Dendermonde, dated January 12, 1805, he relates the following incident of his visit: "The Superior of the Poor Clares, of Tours, died here a few days ago, much esteemed for her piety. Among the sisters of this community is the niece of the two illustrious Brothers de la Rochefoucault,* martyred in Paris during the late revolution. In a conversation I had with her, she related to me that, a short time ago, the French ambassador paid her a visit, and of-

*Céleste la Blonde de la Rochefoucault succeeded Marie de la Marche the former abbess, in 1805; sold the convent to Bishop Neale, by deed of June 29, 1805, and returned to Europe with her companion, Sr. de St. Luc, the same year.

fered her his kind services, stating that several ladies of her noble and respected family were among the Ladies of Honor to the new Empress of France, and that, being young, the same honor might yet be in store for her. The worthy man was soon tired of his empty talk, and, not less quick of tongue than noble of race, she gave him one of the wittiest and most cutting replies it ever was my luck to listen to." For fear of his letter falling into the hands of officials of the Imperial Government, Father Nerinckx withholds it, but states that when, toward the close of the interview, the ambassador remarked that he would try to live as long as he could, she dismissed him with the final remark, that he had to exert himself very much indeed to live a great while longer, since, "les marguerites du cimetiere,"—the grave-yard flowers (meaning his gray hairs)—were already growing on his head.

About a month later, the Rev. Father Urban Guillet, Superior of the Trappists of Pigeon Hills,* near Conewago, Pennsylvania, visited Georgetown on his return from Kentucky, whither he had been to select a more secluded and solitary spot for the establishment of his abbey. This naturally led Father Nerinckx to inquire into the state of his intended mission; and having previously received a few lines of en-

*They had arrived at Baltimore a few months before Rev. Nerinckx, and settled at the Pigeon Hills, August 15, 1804, remaining there about a year.

couragement from Bishop Carroll, he sent him, by the Rev. Prior, the following letter, full of practical wisdom and priestly humility:

"GEORGETOWN, *February* 14, 1805.

"*Right Rev. Sir:*

"I would deem it wrong to neglect the favorable opportunity of the Rev. bearer's visit to your Lordship, to write you a few words, having placed my future into your hands, and knowing to whom I have intrusted that which I have committed to him in the name of the Lord.

"Spring is at the door, and I understand from the remarks of the Rev. Father Prior of the Trappists, that the way by water, which he says to be by far the best, will be closed before June, owing to the scarcity of water in the Ohio river. Since it has so pleased your Lordship to appoint me to the Kentucky mission, I might go in company with the Trappist Fathers, under such conditions as you might agree upon with the Rev. Prior, for I would like to take two trunks along. When the Trappists are ready, and it seems they will be in March, I would like to be notified, so that I may call at Baltimore on my way to join them; unless your Lordship thinks proper not to send me on the mission, either because of my ignorance of the English language, or for other reasons known to you. For I confess openly, that I make little progress in the language, since, besides the lack of practice, for which there is hardly a chance here, I seem

not to have sufficient aptitude to understand the English easily and speak it correctly. Of course, I know I can not try to be eloquent, which I was not even in my native tongue, and I think I need not. If, however, although deficient in speech, I am sent because of the great wants of the people and the lack of other priests, a statement which I found in the letters of St. Francis Xavier, will be a consolation to me: 'none of us know the Japanese language, nevertheless, by reading that half Japanese volume, we brought many over to the religion of Christ.' Surely, sinner as I am, I would not dare to expect such, evidently, supernatural help; but I despair not of the benevolent and powerful intercession of my patron saint, so dear to God and men, if the will of the Lord is manifest that I should work in some part of his vineyard or be of some use to his laborers, a thing which (I hope it ardently, and it is the only consolation of my troubled heart), I will know by the oracle of your word.

"Since, besides the Trappists, the Dominicans are also going to that region, and intend to leave soon, the number of priests will perhaps be increased so much there, that they will stand in very little need of my poor help, in which case your Lordship may dispose of me as you see fit. I would deem it not to be less foolish than sinful to offer myself, or to urge my being sent there; but if God calls and orders me, I consider: 1. The urgent necessity of the faithful;

2. The present favorable opportunity for travel, which it seems is going to last only till June; 3. My desire to improve in English by a more frequent use of it; 4. My earnest wish to send some definite news to my countrymen, who are perhaps burning with zeal for the salvation of their neighbor, and whose fervor might flag and be extinguished by too long a delay. I might also add that several families of this and other congregations, having heard, I do not know how, that I was destined for the Kentucky mission, are preparing to leave for that region, and are, I understand, anxiously inquiring where I will be stationed, desiring, no doubt, to live near the priest.

"It being a thing of daily occurrence, that the devil, hater of all good, resists and harms with all the power and fraud at his command, the diffusion of the Gospel by jealousies and other miseries of that kind, I earnestly desire to take along, determinate in writing, all that relates to jurisdiction, to rights, to limits, and all things open to the danger of dissension; this will, moreover, in my opinion, help a great deal to peace of conscience. I would like to divide the mission intrusted to my care, as I formerly did my parish, with the most consoling and satisfactory results, into different districts, with a view to the easier and more thorough instruction of the settlers; and, with the grace of God, I will devote myself to the utmost of my powers, to the good of my flock, visiting, helping, and guiding them.

That I may effect this the more readily, I have thought proper to ask the faculties mentioned in the following schedule (our President tells me that I can easily obtain these spiritual favors), viz.: 1. To introduce the devotion of the perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament; 2. To establish the confraternities of the Holy Name of Jesus, of the Holy Rosary, of the Souls in Purgatory, or any other, if deemed advisable, in every congregation of at least twenty-five communicants; that is, two of these societies in each, the favors to be gained on two Sundays of each month; 3. To grant, to those who teach catechism, the indulgences granted by the Popes to the societies instituted for that end.

"You will please remember, Right Rev. Sir, that I have brought nothing from the old country but a silver chalice, and I am informed by the Trappists, that the region I am sent to is entirely destitute, or almost so, of sacred vestments; also, that it is very difficult to get Mass-wine. They intend to take along from Baltimore a barrel of Mass-wine, and it will, perhaps, be necessary for me to do the same. I can get neither Ritual nor books here; hence, let not your Lordship take it amiss, if I ask of your zeal and piety to provide me with them, if at all possible; so that, going forth totally unarmed and unfit to fight the hard battles of the Lord, I be not entirely without the efficient aid of catechisms and pious books.

"I think there will be sufficient money sent

from Kentucky to pay my way thither, since its use may be conceded to me, considering my poverty. Before my affairs are definitely settled in Belgium, I would not dare to use the little sum given me for specific purposes, except in a grave necessity. For the rest, I will, God helping me, try to seek his kingdom, less solicitous for the things to be added. May God spare me and those in power at the awful judgment day!

"This is all I desired to submit to your Lordship's consideration. The bearer, Rev. Father Prior, and our President, who intends also to travel through Kentucky, will, I think, add something by word of mouth . . .

"Your Lordship's obedient and humble servant,

"C. Nerinckx."

"P. S. Whatever you destine for me, Rev. Blosius, who took upon himself to prepare my trunks, will take care of."

The encouraging reply of Bishop Carroll, confirming the previous appointment, and instructing him to be ready within a month's time, dispelled all further doubts from the mind of the humble priest. What little money he possessed had to defray the traveling expenses of a three months' journey, and complete the little store of indispensable articles which the charitable endeavors of his Baltimore friends could not entirely provide.

Father Nerinckx describes the incidents of his journey to Kentucky in the following letter to

his parents,* dated May 6, 1806: "I left Georgetown College, the week before Pentecost. The next morning I arrived in Baltimore, where I remained two days to receive Bishop Carroll's instructions and blessing. Thence I traveled in a wagon belonging to the Trappist Fathers to *Conewago* (Adams county), Pennsylvania, fifty miles from Baltimore, where these Religious have their convent. A beautiful chapel has been built in the neighborhood by a Jesuit Father, and in the pastoral residence I found a precious library of Flemish and Dutch books left by a Franciscan missionary of Liege who had resided here.† The two resident priests who take care of the Conewago mission, received me with great kindness. They are both secular priests; Rev. Bart, a Frenchman, has spent fourteen years in the American mission: Rev. Merkx is a Luxemburger; they minister to about two thousand catholics, most of whom speak German but understand and speak English as well. I remained with them during Pentecost week and helped them in the Confessional; I also attended a neighboring town of about one hundred and twenty families called *Hanover*, and said Mass for the seven or eight catholic families residing there. Here I made my first attempt at an English sermon; you can imagine how I expressed myself! I managed,

*MS. letter in the library of the Bollandist Fathers, S. J Brussels, Belgium.

†Probably Rev. Stanislaus Cersonmont. See page 30.

however, to say what I intended to say and bring it to a close.

"The following Monday, being the 10th of June, I left Conewago with the whole Trappist community; Rev. Mr. Bart accompanied me a distance of fourteen miles, and forced me to accept four pair of stockings, some underclothing, and a handkerchief. The caravan consisted of thirty-seven persons, seven or eight of whom were priests, among them my traveling companion on the sea, Father Charles Guny, who is in excellent health and spirits. We lived *a la Trappiste:* bread and butter (the latter allowed because we were traveling), was our only food; water, our only drink; we invariably lodged in barns, which differ but little from the public inn known as the 'Blue Heavens.' The monks never spoke; however, they prayed aloud, and they were allowed to talk to me; but as we had nothing to talk about, they scarcely availed themselves of the permission. We traveled until late in the night, and were awakened about four o'clock in the morning, when I usually set out ahead of the party, to escape the midday's march in the scorching heat of the sun, and to think of my own spiritual concerns. I would never have tired of that company, had not their four wagons made our progress so exceedingly slow, that I thought myself in duty bound to follow Bishop Carroll's advice to push ahead if, as he foresaw, the Trappist party traveled too leisurely. Shortly after I had made up my mind to strike out for myself,

their wagon broke down. After having waited for them a day and a half in Bedford,* I bought a horse with saddle and bridle for $75, and started alone, in God's name, through the lonely half-cleared woodlands of the State of Ohio.

"I must have made fifty miles a day for about ten days. Within thirty miles from *Charlesborough*, a woman rushed toward me out of the woods, thinking I was a protestant minister. When I informed her that I was a catholic priest she wept for joy, and entreated me to stop at her house, as she was a catholic herself, and had not seen a priest for four years. I there learned that several other catholic families, all of whom feared they would have to die without the consolation of receiving the rites of the church, lived in the neighborhood; that some were scattered in the woods, but had, through human respect or other reasons, given up all practices of religion.

"I arrived at the house of Rev. Badin, the center of the Catholics of Kentucky, on the 18th of July."

The Rev. Stephen Theodore Badin was at that time, 1805, the only resident priest of Kentucky; the Trappists arrived only in the fall of the same year.

Here, then, was to be the field of Father Nerinckx' usefulness. What was that foreigner, who, to use his own words, "had scarcely picked up a few words of English, and always spoke it

*A town where the house of an Indian chief still exists."

badly and barbarously," who entreated his Bishop, "not to dread to tell him plainly that he was of no use on the mission, since he himself thought so,"—what was that foreigner going to do in this field of labor, it being one of the most extensive and the most thoroughly English missions on the American continent? Would not the people render the verdict against him, which the kind-hearted Bishop had refused to pronounce? Would he be of any use? His works will answer.

Before we begin the description of his missionary labors, let us take a rapid survey of the early missions of Kentucky.

CHAPTER V.

1672–1805.

EARLY KENTUCKY HISTORY.—THE SHAWNEES.—VIRGINIA EXPLORERS.—CATHOLIC SETTLERS FROM MARYLAND.—THE LEAGUE OF SIXTY CATHOLIC FAMILIES.—FATHER WHELAN.—THE FIRST CATHOLIC CHURCH IN KENTUCKY.—FATHER BADIN.—ST. ANN'S CHURCH.—OTHER MISSIONARIES.—FATHER NERINCKX.

KENTUCKY must have changed hands more than once during the early days, when Indians were the only claimants to fight for the possession of that beautiful country.

Most authors agree that it was a kind of neutral territory, or rather, a region, for the exclusive ownership of which many of the savage tribes long waged war. As such, it became, as has been the case among the more civilized nations of the European world, the theater of many a bloody conflict, which merited for this Indian battle-ground, the awe-inspiring name of the "Dark and Bloody Ground." As early, however, as 1672, the *Shawnees* or *Showanoes*, a tribe belonging originally to the Algonquin-Lenape nation, after having been driven from Eastern Pennsylvania and the southern shore of Lake Erie by the warlike Iroquois, took possession of

Kentucky, where Father Marquette found them in 1673, on his journey of discovery down the Mississippi. "We arrived," he says, "at the *Ouabouskigou.** This river comes from the lands of the East, where dwell the people called *Chouanons* [Shawnees], in so great numbers, that in a quarter of a day we counted twenty-three villages, and fifteen in another, all very near to each other. They are not a warlike people: these are the tribes which the Iroquois are constantly pursuing to wage war against them and without any reason; because these poor people can not defend themselves, they allow themselves to be taken prisoners and be led away like sheep; and, however inoffensive, they can not but resent the barbarity of the Iroquois who even cruelly burn them."† On the map accompanying the account of this journey, Father Marquette marks the Shawnee village south of the Ohio and east of the Mississippi rivers. His report of the situation of the Shawnee tribe is corroborated by Father Gravier's narrative of his own journey down the Mississippi in 1700, written February 16, 1701, in which he states that the third river (meaning the Tennes-

*Later known as the *Oubache: La belle Rivière* of the French, now called the Ohio river. The northern affluent retained the original name Americanized into the *Wabash* river of to-day.

†Cfr. "Voyage et découverte, etc., par le P. Marquette et Sr. Joliet, a Paris, chez Estienne Michalet, rue S. Jaques, à l'Image de S. Paul, MDC LXXXI. O. Rich's reprint, 1845." Page 32, sq.

see), swelling the waters of the Ouabachi comes from the S. S. W., on which are the Chaouanoua.*

The fierce Iroquois continued to make war on this innocent and gentle race, until, in the beginning of the eighteenth century, the confederacy of the Six Nations claimed the ownership of Kentucky, by right of conquest. It was only at the conclusion of the Franco-British war of 1755–1763, that they practically relinquished their claim to Kentucky. The Cherokees sold their right to the soil south of the Kentucky river, in 1775, to Colonel Henderson in consideration of £10,000; and although the legislature of Virginia set this treaty aside, it assigned ample territory to the Henderson Land Company, in the north-western part of the State.

Virginians were the first white people who visited Kentucky. Conspicuous among these hardy first adventurers was the renowned Daniel Boone, who entered it in 1769, and again in 1775 as guide to a party sent out by the Henderson Land Company. Several colonies were established and made permanent by emigrants from Virginia, South Carolina and Maryland; and, in 1782, General Clark succeeded in conquering the whole territory from the British and their Indian allies, a result which General Wayne firmly consolidated, in 1794, by the famous victory on the Maumee.

We do not propose to give a full history of

*See John G. Shea's "Early Voyages up and down the Mississippi," pg. 120. "Albany, Joel Munsel, 1861."

the settlement of the State, particulars of which are related, at some length, by Archbishop Spalding in his *Sketches of Kentucky*, and in all their interesting details by Marshall, Butler, and Collins. We shall content ourselves with very briefly describing the establishment of the few catholic missionary stations, previous to the arrival of Father Nerinckx in the country.*

William Coomes and family, accompanied by Doctor Hart, an exemplary Irish catholic, emigrated from St. Charles county, Maryland, in the Spring of 1775, and settled at Harrod's Station, where Mrs. Coomes subsequently opened a school for the education of the children. They were among the first white people who removed to Kentucky. But Catholic Marylanders only

*In many things we are guided by the "Sketches of Kentucky," Chap. III., sq. For the other details not heretofore published, we are indebted to Rev. Walter H. Hill, S. J., who writes: "These statements can be fully relied on as being accurate. They were collected and verified for me by Clement S. Hill, Esq., of Lebanon, Ky., on the testimony of several persons who witnessed them: as, the aged and pious Mrs. McLane, daughter of Henry Cambron; she died in 1875, aged ninety-three, possessing the perfect use of her faculties, with her memory retentive and lively till her final illness. Also, that of the venerable Alexander Hamilton, who still survives, and who witnessed the dedication of St. Ann's in 1798; his father had emigrated with his family from Maryland, in 1797. And also by the statements and traditions of the other families. Father Badin stated to me, a few years previous to his death, some of the above particulars about St. Ann's, adding that Clement Hill was regularly sent from 'Cartwright's Creek' to act as his guide through the wilderness when he went to say Mass." Father Hill is himself a grandson of Thomas Hill, who emigrated from Maryland to Kentucky, in 1787.

began a systematic emigration to the State in 1785.

That year a league was formed in Maryland by sixty catholic families to emigrate to Kentucky, and settle together, for mutual protection against the Indians; and also, in order that they might have church and priest. They agreed to get a priest to accompany them, if it were possible. Basil Hayden's bond for his land is signed at Baltimore, in 1785, and it calls to bond on Philimer Lee; this bond is recorded at Bardstown. They subsequently lived adjoining neighbors on Pottinger's Creek.

These sixty families were to emigrate as circumstances permitted. They did not all start together; some emigrated in 1785, twenty-five families going to Kentucky that year, among them the Haydens and Lancasters. They reached their adopted State that same year, and they settled chiefly on Pottinger's Creek.*

More families followed in the Spring of 1786 with Captain James Rapier, settling, according to the terms of the league, in the same neighborhood. In the following year, 1787, another portion of the colony left Maryland in two parties; one with Edward Howard, the other with Philip Miles and Thomas Hill; and most of the remaining families belonging to the

* Kentucky was first a county of Virginia; at the period here referred to, or in 1785, it had been divided into three counties, namely: Jefferson, Lincoln, and Fayette. The district settled by the first catholic emigrants was in Jefferson county, or in what is now, Nelson, Washington, and Marion counties.

league, together with many others who had not joined it, reached their destination in 1788 with Robert Abell. Edward Howard, who emigrated to Kentucky in 1787, was accompanied, it is supposed, by *Father Whelan*, an Irish Franciscan of Maryland, *the first priest* who went to the new catholic colony. Howard went from Louisville to Pottinger's Creek by way of Bullitt's Lick—"Salt Lick"—where salt was first made in Kentucky: it was a few miles from the spot where now stands the town of Shepherdsville, on Salt River. He worked his path through the forest, by "blazing the trees," and his trail was followed by succeeding emigrants, their road to Pottinger's Creek passing also by way of Bardstown.

Philimer Lee, or as he was better known, Philip Lee, kept a record, which is still extant, and which he began as early as 1735, in Maryland. From the entries in that record, he may be seen to have had many neighbors of the same name, in Maryland and in Kentucky: Haydens, Thompsons, Smiths, Rapiers, Cashs, Russels, Howards, Browns,* Coomes, Lancasters, etc., all of whom, it would appear, belonged to the league of the sixty families.

Father Whelan attended to the spiritual wants of the catholic families of Kentucky for a little more than two years, and in consequence

*Joseph Brown was one of the league, and his was one of the twenty-five families that reached Kentucky in 1785; he was the maternal grandfather of Rev. J. B. Hutchins of Loretto.

of the difficulties without number which beset his ministry, returned to Maryland in the Spring of 1790. In the same year a colony came out with Benedict Spalding, followed in the ensuing year by other emigrants who accompanied Leonard Hamilton. The greater portion of these located themselves on the Rolling Fork of the Salt River, in the neighborhood where is now Holy Mary's or Calvary. Leonard Mattingly and many others who settled on Hardin's Creek, came out from Maryland in 1791.

In the Summer of 1790, Father *William de Rohan*, an Irish priest educated in France, arrived in Kentucky with a caravan of emigrants from North Carolina and East Tennessee; and he continued some time saying Mass and administering the sacraments. That same year, 1790, he built, on *Pottinger's Creek*, a log chapel, which he dedicated to the Holy Cross; this temporary hut was covered with clapboard and was unprovided with glass in the windows; a slab of wood roughly hewed served for an altar. Such was *the first catholic church ever built in Kentucky!* Soon after its erection, Rev. de Rohan discontinued the active employments of the ministry, by direction of Bishop Carroll. He subsequently led a quiet and edifying life, and he died at an advanced age in 1833 or 1834, at St. Thomas Seminary, in Nelson county.

In 1793, Bishop Carroll of Baltimore, aware of the destitute condition of the Kentucky catholic settlements, selected for this arduous mission

the *Rev. Stephen Theodore Badin*, whom he had ordained the 25th of May, of the same year, that gentleman being the first priest ever ordained in the United States. The Rev. Mr. Barrieres, a more aged clergyman, was constituted Vicar-general of the distant missionary district, and accompanied Father Badin, arriving in Kentucky in September, 1793. But, unable to adapt himself to the rude state of society in the, then, wilderness, Father Barrieres departed for New Orleans in April, 1794, leaving the young priest alone to attend to the wants of the now numerous and widely scattered catholic immigrants, till 1797, when the *Rev. Mr. Fournier* was sent to his assistance.

St. Ann's, on *Cartwright's Creek*, which became in a short time the largest and most important congregation, was the *second church* built in Kentucky. The original nucleus of St. Ann's congregation consisted of two families, that of Thomas Hill and that of Henry Cambron. Cambron came, together with his father, from Montgomery county, Maryland, seven miles from Georgetown, reaching Kentucky in 1788. He settled near the site of the present St. Rose's church, in the immediate vicinity of a mill belonging to John Waller. This mill and the farm attached to it, were selected by Rev. Edward Fenwick, O. P., who visited Kentucky in 1805, as a convenient spot for a convent of his order; and were bought by him on his return from Maryland with his religious brethren, in 1806,

in order to establish there a community of Dominicans, who took possession of the place in that year. Thomas Hill came from St. Mary's county, Maryland, five miles from Leonardstown, in the Spring of 1787, along with his brother-in-law, Philip Miles. Their boats were attacked by the Indians, twenty miles above Louisville, then Fort Nelson; a negro man, belonging to Hill, and all their horses, were killed, and an ounce musket ball passed through both thighs of Hill. He remained at Bardstown two years, in consequence of his wounds; and as he heard numerous complaints from the large colony that came, in 1788, concerning the sterility of the land on Pottinger's Creek, he determined on selecting a more inviting locality; and accordingly, he went, in 1789, to Cartwright's Creek, near to the spot where Henry Cambron had located in the preceding year.

In the following year, 1790, they conceived the project of going upon the table-land, some two miles to the south-east, on the ridge, and buying adjoining farms, there building a church, in order to gather the catholics around them. They did as thus proposed; and, as soon as land could be cleared of the timber sufficiently to raise necessary crops, they began the erection of a church, in the year 1794. Their church was dedicated to St. Ann by Fathers Badin and Fournier, in 1798; Mass having been said for several years previous, by Father Badin, in the cabin of Thomas Hill.

As was expected, the catholics settled around St. Ann's in great numbers, speedily forming the most numerous congregation in the Territory. Among the families who collected about St. Ann's church may be named: Leonard Hamilton, Thomas Hamilton, the Fenwicks, Clarkes, Caricos, Boons, Montgomerys, Johnsons, Clarksons, Edelens, etc. Father Fournier had charge of St. Ann's, styled oftentimes "Cartwright's Creek," till his death in 1803. It was then attended by Father Badin till the arrival of Father Nerinckx in 1805, who had charge of St. Ann's till late in 1806, when it was made over to the Dominicans. St. Ann's congregation, subsequently to the practical closing of their church for service in 1808, constituted the *St. Rose's* congregation up to the time of the completion of the church in Lebanon. St. Rose's congregation, it was supposed, then included one-third of all the Catholic population of Kentucky.

Father Badin had taken up his residence near Holy Cross church, which was situated about at the center of the catholic settlement. He subsequently erected a temporary chapel at his other later residence, three miles from Holy Cross: this he called *St. Stephen's*, after his patron Saint. From that point he attended several stations, the most important, besides the two already named, being, in 1799, those at Bardstown, at Lexington, in Scott county, in Madison county, in Mercer county—where there

were about ten families, on Hardin's Creek, on the Rolling Fork in Hardin county, and at Poplar Neck on the Beech Fork. These last six named, together with St. Ann's church, were subsequently attended by Father Fournier until his death, in 1803.

Father Fournier, soon after his arrival in Kentucky, in 1797, purchased one hundred acres of ground on the Rolling Fork—the site of the present Holy Mary's—and, after having erected a temporary hut, removed thither in 1798.* He was, however, relieved of the care of the stations at Hardin's Creek, Poplar Neck, and Mr. Gardiner's, for the short period of nine months, during which *Rev. Anthony Salmon*, another French priest, took care of these and of the Bardstown mission. That zealous and indefatigable priest reached Kentucky in February, 1799, and fell, a martyr to his zeal in the discharge of his duties, on the 9th of November of the same year, when, on his way to the missionary station at Mr. Gwynn's, he was thrown violently from his horse, and mortally wounded. Father Badin administered the last sacraments to his friend and fellow-laborer, who died the next day, and was buried in the grave-yard at Holy Cross. He was the first priest who died in Kentucky.

In the same year, Bishop Carroll sent out to Kentucky the Rev. Mr. Thayer, a converted presbyterian minister, who became a priest in

*See "Sketches of Kentucky," above quoted. Father Nerinckx calls it ninety-four acres in his letter of May 16, 1806.

France, and was first stationed at Boston. He, however, remained in the western mission only four years, during two of which he was engaged in the ministry, and he left Kentucky in 1803.

Father Fournier, who, speaking the English language fluently and being a man of very engaging manners, was much loved by the people, over all of whom he had a beneficial influence, died that very year. He was killed while working at the whip-saw, the log falling and crushing him beneath it. His remains were buried at Holy Cross, beside those of Father Salmon. The only monument which marks the last resting-place of these zealous pioneers, is a heap of broken stone, raised, a few years since, over their graves, by Rev. Francis Wuyts of Loretto.

The energetic Father Badin was again left alone for more than seventeen months, his nearest brother clergyman being the Rev. Donatien Olivier, at Prairie du Rocher, in Illinois. There was only one other priest in the whole northwest, at that time; the Rev. Gabriel Richard, stationed at Detroit, Michigan. Rev. Father Rivet, a warm friend of Mr. Badin, and his nearest neighbor, at Post Vincennes, had also died in 1803, leaving the poor missionary forlorn and desolate after so many separations.

Father Badin continued to reside at St. Stephen's. His missionary duties had, however, greatly increased; "on his first arrival in the State, the number of catholic families did not exceed seven hundred; twelve years had elapsed,

and the number had now swelled to nearly seven thousand."* These were scattered over the whole state, and to visit them all, even occasionally, required almost superhuman exertions in one solitary missionary.

"Divine Providence, at length, took compassion on the forlorn condition of Mr. Badin, and sent him a zealous and indefatigable auxiliary, who was to relieve him of a great portion of the heavy burden, which had been long weighing him down, and exhausting his energies. In the annals of missionary life in the west," says Archbishop Spalding, "few names are brighter than that of *Rev. Charles Nerinckx.* A native of Belgium, and, like most of the other early catholic missionaries in the west, a victim of the French Revolution, he arrived in Kentucky in 1805; and he labored with unremitting zeal in the missionary field, for nearly twenty years."†

*Letter of Father Nerinckx, of May 16, 1806. He adds: "some claim that there are now as many as thirteen thousand catholics in Kentucky."

†"Sketches of Kentucky," pgg. 130–1.

CHAPTER VI.

1805–1806.

FATHER NERINCKX ON THE MISSION.—A NOBLE PROJECT.—HE WRITES TO BELGIUM FOR MEN AND MONEY.—"THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS."—POVERTY OF KENTUCKY CATHOLICS.—A VISIT TO POST VINCENNES.—WHO SHALL BE BISHOP OF KENTUCKY?—A PEN-PICTURE OF FATHER BADIN

FATHER NERINCKX was forty-four years of age when he entered upon this extensive missionary field of labor, the difficulties of which had made many a younger man shrink from it. The many trials and vigils of his seven years seclusion in Dendermonde, had somewhat impaired his health; but having an iron constitution and giant strength, he could still hope for a long and laborious exercise of the holy ministry. However, he little thought of himself. As we have seen, his humility led him to believe that he was of no use to the missions; and, if his zeal for the salvation of souls induced him to request a speedy appointment to a mission, it was especially because he desired to let his friends in the Old Country know the state of affairs, and carry out a noble plan, which none but a generous soul could conceive.

Father Nerinckx had left, in Belgium, many of his brethren in the ministry, whose learning and zeal he was eager to secure for the struggling American Church. Prevented from exercising their sacred calling in the land of their birth, they had expressed a willingness to follow him to the New World and devote themselves to the missions, as soon as they would receive authentic assurances that their services were needed in the new field to which their respected friend had gone. Moreover, many wealthy friends interested themselves in Rev. Nerinckx' welfare and in the prosperity of the country which he had come to evangelize. It therefore occurred to him that it would be a most advantageous plan for his countrymen and for the mission to which he had been sent, to center in one state whatever men and means he might procure, in order to make it a thoroughly catholic region. This would give the newcomers the benefits of companionship and frequent pious conversation which they had enjoyed at home, and which he knew, men no longer young, and with habits formed, would greatly miss in a strange land. Kentucky would so become a focus of catholicity, whence the rays of faith would again radiate far and wide; an oasis in the desert, adorned with noble churches which the wealth of friends would enable him to build, and enriched with the talented men whom he desired to gain to the cause. The realization of that project would be his country's mite

to America's enlightenment; an everlasting monument of the zeal of Catholic Belgium for the extension of our Holy Faith.

With this object in view, he set to work with greater ardor, accompanying Father Badin to all the stations which, up to that time, solely depended on the ministrations of that indefatigable pioneer. A few months sufficed to convince him of the great harvest to be gathered in, and caused him to state that, "where thirteen years ago there was only one church, we now count twenty congregations; non-catholic settlers abandon their farms, I mean, sell them as fast as catholics arrive and grow in numbers."*

As early as September, 1805, he wrote to Belgium: "I am glad to hear that what I lately wrote about our distress has caused a reverend gentleman, named De Cuyper, to make up his mind to come and help us. I beg to assure you that my letters did not begin to do justice to the abandoned state of our catholic brethren in these regions; were we twelve priests, we would not suffice to keep our co-religionists in the faith, or satisfy the demand for help. Besides Kentucky, Louisiana, which is as large as half of all the other States, and which, under Spanish domination, was entirely catholic, is, so to say, completely neglected and without priests; Illinois and the country around Post St. Vincent are in danger of losing the faith from the same cause . .

*Letter of Father Nerinckx, dated, "Ash-Wednesday, 1807," to his parents.

"On the other hand outsiders continually call for priests, and offer us any amount of land; one gentleman offers us a thousand acres; the Governor of the new State of Tennessee, about two hundred miles from here, offers to give a farm to us all, if we build churches there. Those people know that the catholics follow their priests, and that by those means they would gain settlers and have a chance of selling the public lands. . . . Oh! that I had words to enlist some virtuous priests in the cause of religion! But they must be men who have nothing but God's glory and the welfare of suffering christians at heart; men of solid and true principles, grounded in devotion and of unexceptional morality; purity of character, sobriety, and love of solitude are desirable every where, but are here of prime necessity."*

Father Nerinckx wrote, from Holy Mary's at the Rolling Fork, on the 6th of February, 1806, a letter to Bishop Carroll, setting forth his plans, and desiring him to consent to have Kentucky selected for the purpose. "The field," he writes, "is every-where full of weeds and thistles that choke the good seed, there being only two who can see to it to cut them in time. In consequence, I feel it my duty to manifest to your Lordship my desire of having in this region my countryman, Rev. De Cuyper,† and others, if there are

* MS. letter of Rev. Father Nerinckx began September, 1805, ended May 16, 1806.

† That reverend gentleman had left London, August 2, 1805,

any who are willing to come out here. The necessity is urgent indeed, for Kentucky is in the most abject spiritual misery. If you allow me to speak my mind, I do not think it good to send my countrymen in places far distant from one another, because, being new-comers, they would not know how or where to settle when they arrive in the missions, or where to die a quiet death when exhausted by work, age, or sickness. Hence, I would deem it better to send, whatever subsidies might be expected from our country, to one region, instead of having them scattered far and wide, or in missions very distant from them. This being approved of, it would only be left to determine the choice of such place. Your Lordship will deign to select it, with your usual keen perception and enlightened prudence. I know it well; all the regions of your extensive diocese ardently desire priests; but I can hardly believe it possible to find greater need than here, where there is, moreover, reasonable hope of abundant fruits. However, I would not importune a man to come out here, unless he be brimful of the zeal of God and charity for his neighbors, seeking only the things of Christ, convinced that he will not find his own. Only under these conditions do I most lovingly invite whoever is willing to come." *

Father Nerinckx, at the same time, addressed

and arrived in Baltimore the 17th of September. He died shortly after at Georgetown College.

* Baltimore MSS. letters.

letters to several of his Belgian friends, asking for "men, vestments, and money for the American mission." He also requested the Bishop to write to Mr. Dewolf, of Antwerp, "a few words which will add more weight to what I relate of the wants of our congregations, and enhance its value and truthfulness in the eyes of my friends," a request which Bishop Carroll readily complied with in the following letter:

"BALTIMORE, *April* 1, 1806.

"*Sir:*

"Your very estimable friend, Mr. Nerinckx, has sent me, from Kentucky, an account of his apostolic labors, a large package of letters addressed to you, which I have the honor of transmitting by a vessel that is to leave this port tomorrow for Amsterdam. While transmitting them I take a liberty which you will surely pardon me.

"From the description given me by Mr. Nerinckx, I am aware of your zeal for the increase of the true religion in the diocese which Providence has confided to me, and of your kindness in interesting yourself to send ecclesiastics whose life and talents will edify the faithful and maintain the faith. Ah! sir, if it were possible for you to find and persuade five or six priests like Mr. Nerinckx, it is incredible how much they would extend, in these vast regions, the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

"Although he has but imperfectly acquired our language, still, every account from Kentucky

already speaks of him as a man who has won the respect, confidence, and veneration of the whole people. I feel only one anxiety about him: it is, that, incessantly engaged in the functions of his apostolate, he will be exhausted by toil.

"His friend, Mr. Cuypers, who was to have been his coadjutor and consolation, sank under the delicacy of his constitution before commencing his career in the mission which awaited him. I do not know whether it was in his voyage from Amsterdam, or a few days after his landing, that he was attacked with a dysentery. It did not at first seem dangerous. I advised him to go to Georgetown College, the healthiest place in the country, both to recruit and to become more familiar with our language, before starting to join Mr. Nerinckx. Notwithstanding all possible care, his disease grew worse, and he died a few days before Christmas, in the arms of my coadjutor. You will say with me, that his death, disastrous for my diocese, is only the greatest advantage to him, by advancing the day of his happy entrance into Heaven. His piety made a lively impression on all at the college, and served to excite all to the exercise of virtue.

"Receive, sir, the assurance of my gratitude, respect, and of my desire to serve you when in my power.

"I have the honor to be, sir, your most obedient servant,

"†JOHN, Bishop of Baltimore."*

*Copied from "Western Missions and Missionaries," by De Smedt, S. J., pg. 457–8.

Having conceived a high opinion of some priests whom he had met at Georgetown, Father Nerinckx also called Bishop Carroll's attention to the necessity of appointing a Bishop for Kentucky, as soon as possible. On that subject, he wrote the same year: "I can not but renew my sincere wish to have, along with other laborers, a Bishop; one who will visit his flock, not once in a long while, and in a passing way, but who shall live here in its midst, and visit it regularly and often; a man, *omni exceptione major*, to whom this flock, almost more miserable than misery itself, will be committed." *

Having thus fulfilled what he considered his mission, the humble priest resumed the arduous duties of his wandering life, with more courage and greater hope for the future, "strengthened and consoled," as he writes, "almost solely by the three following considerations: 1. I can be excused of presumption before God, in my enterprise, because there are absolutely no others to be found who come to do it better; 2. This expression of the holy founder of the Jesuits: 'Were it that I had my choice, I would rather live in the uncertainty of my salvation, and at the same time serve God and my neighbor, than die at this very moment, with the assurance of my salvation;' 3. The letter of St. Francis Xavier to Francis Mansilla: 'If you can not do what you will, will what you can, . . . and if you find so much to be done that you can not

* Baltimore MSS.

take it all to heart, do as much as you can and be satisfied. Thank God even for that, that he has guided you to such places, where, because of the multiplicity of spiritual work, it would be impossible to be lazy, even if you wanted to, a thing which must surely be counted among the great graces of God. Deem yourself happy to be in purgatory to satisfy for the punishments due to your sins, and you will think all the more of the mercy of God, who has exchanged your purgatory for those pains.' Such and similar considerations sweeten the bitterness and sorrows I experience." The fact is, that Father Nerinckx looked upon himself more in the light of a John the Baptist, who was to prepare the way of the Lord, and make straight the paths for the chosen men who were to come after him, and who, he thought, were preferred before him to preach the Word of God to the people. That he, himself, was selected to fill the valleys, to bring low the hills and mountains, to make the rough ways plain, and cause hundreds of souls to see the salvation of God, we shall subsequently see; but that he was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, is scarcely to be doubted, when we consider the poverty of Kentucky at that time, as described in the correspondence of the missionary.

The following extract, from a letter written to his parents, in 1807, is somewhat quaint, but conveys withal a very adequate idea of the sufferings which a man used, at least to what are

considered necessary comforts of life, and, but for his mortifications, to the refinements of polite society, for forty years, must have undergone:

"In a recent letter I described to you all the *nays* of this country: *v. g.*, no cheese, little or no vegetables, no wine, no beer, no oil, no coal, no turf, no bells, no sparrows, very few or no singing birds, no mosquitoes,* scarcely ever fresh meat, no stoves, no spices or fine herbs, no peaches, no fruit-trees with the exception of wild apple and pear trees, no hedges, no ditches, no stone roads, no slate roofs, no floor or roof tiles. I told you, that the most wonderful thing here was, that there is nothing wonderful to be found. A Fleming can surely not be enticed to this country by curiosity; one thing might, perhaps, induce him to come; that is, the facility of making a living, if he is satisfied with little, and is willing to work . . . The Indians are al-

*The good missionary could scarcely have felt the absence of that nuisance, had he dwelt near the rivers. There is no country in Europe in which these pestilent insects are so numerous and so annoying, as they are near the water-courses in the western and southern states of America. The mosquito-bar, which, in some districts, is almost a simple necessity for the preservation of one's life during the summer-nights' sleep, is an unknown piece of drapery in European dwellings. The mosquitoes must have settled in Kentucky very early in this century. So at least thought the writer when he experienced the stunning familiarity with which these blood-suckers made for him, through a dilapidated mosquito-bar, during a summer's sleepless night in Louisville. The aggravating way in which they heralded their approach, convinced him that they laid full claim to citizenship on "the dark and bloody ground."

ready one hundred and fifty miles away from here.

"When you send church articles," he continues, "also add some money, that I may be enabled to have them brought here, for we have no means of support. As I told you in one of my former letters,* my salary will never reach $200; our plantations must support us, and every thing is dear. Common broadcloth sells at $7 a yard; a pair of shoes costs $2; I have to pay $20 for a common saddle. The gentlemen, (so they call the priests here), are obliged to supply every thing in almost all the churches. But here arises an objection. The question may be asked, how these two things can be reconciled: that our people are so attached to their religion, and so slow in helping it along by temporal aid? I answer: the people now settled in Kentucky, very few or rather none excepted, come here from Maryland, if catholics; from other States if heretics; and nearly all in such a state or condition, that they were in the absolute impossibility of living there any longer, the land they occupied being well-nigh exhausted; hence all are poor, and some in extreme want. Many Irishmen come from Europe as badly supplied . . . They located in the worst agricultural portion of the State, probably because the first catholics settled in this place in 1785. The first catholic priest was stationed here, and the largest number of settlers, although not over pious,

* Letter of September, 1805.

wished to live near the priest. This is the case when they are poor. When, however, they begin to hunt for wealth, they go to more distant regions, without any further care for religion, and so they avoid contributing for church purposes. Again, priests are scarce; hence the people are not duly impressed with their duty in that respect, although what is asked of them is very little. Father Badin asks one bushel out of every hundred. According to what my predecessor had, I have a right to $1.50 from every family, but the sixth part of these dues will not be paid. Protestants who become converts to our holy religion and are as a rule in better circumstances because occupying the best lands, are few in number and less accustomed to these small duties, although they often become the best christians. Finally, all alike are affected, as in our country, with the complaint commonly called *money-fever*, which is very endemic. I can truly say that I alone have contributed more to the church, than the four or five hundred families under my care taken together; and that during my two years' residence here, I have not appropriated three dollars of the salary to my own use. God provides, and I hope he will reward my host for the board he gives me, and bless you and other good souls of my fatherland who, by their donations, help to build up the Church of God through my unworthy hands. May it please God to give them his beautiful

heaven for such noble deeds, and admit me into their sweet company!"

No wonder that this poor priest boasted later of "a palace that had cost him just $6.50 in money!" In order not to tax his parishioners, he built it himself, chiefly with his own hands; and the modest appearance of Loretto and of the house of its founder, proclaims, more eloquently than any words of ours could express, that Rev. Nerinckx not only cheerfully suffered want, but became thoroughly imbued with the holy spirit of poverty, which he and his sisterhood so heroically practiced in later years.

However, before going to so extravagant an expense in the way of "palace" building, Father Nerinckx lived some time with Father Badin, at St. Stephen's, Marion county, in a log-house. It was built by the same reverend gentleman on the identical spot now graced by the substantial buildings and delightful grounds of the Loretto Mother-house, and was the headquarters of the truly apostolic missionaries whose labors a grateful people to this day remembers.

Father Nerinckx spent the first winter of his missionary life in Kentucky, going from mission to mission, to celebrate and preach the Jubilee, rightly thinking that the advent of several new priests would be a good opportunity for the people to go to the Holy Sacraments.

"On the 2d of December, 1805, we have opened the first Jubilee ever held in this part of

the New World. About one P. M., we walked in procession from the parish church, now called *Holy Cross*, to the house where the Trappists live, a distance of nearly a mile. I had the happiness of carrying the Most Blessed Sacrament, and gave benediction from an altar built alongside the street. The priests of the Trappist community—another has joined it lately—assisted, clad in sacredotal garments, and the people showed much devotion. The good work is eminently successful, but it is impossible to do justice to it; it is as much above our strength as the sun is above our heads. We find out scores of people of twenty years and over, who never made their first communion; early rising, hard work, and late meals, tell on us all, and we are so lean that we will soon be able to worry through the narrow gate of heaven. God grant it?" *

Having finished the visitation of the different Kentucky stations, the two set out for Post Vincennes early in the Spring of 1806. This station had not been visited since Father Olivier, then residing at Prairie du Rocher, among the French Catholics on the Mississippi, had spent there two weeks in July, 1805. Father Nerinckx was very anxious to undertake that journey. Having given up his intention of joining the Trappists, out of obedience to his Bishop, he was now revolving in his mind the possibility of indulging his love for seclusion and for a life of austerity,

* Letter of Rev. Nerinckx of December 6, 1805.

by becoming a missionary to the Indians, a plan against which, he thought, Bishop Carroll could not urge the necessity of other missions. That he succeeded no better, in this second attempt to bury himself out of sight of the world, is evident from the following extract from a letter to his parents, written in May, 1807. "I have not yet determined where to live. The Vicar-general Badin wishes me to remain with him, and the Bishop of Baltimore entreats me not to go to the State or Territory of Indiana, where he intends to send two countrymen of mine, the Jesuits, Fathers Malave and Henry. As soon as other fathers arrive from Europe, to fill their places at Georgetown, they will start for that mission."* . . .

Fathers Badin and Nerinckx "arrived at the Post on the 14th of April, and remained until the 27th, 1806, baptizing many children and assisting at several marriages, besides administering the other sacraments as usual."† Father Nerinckx, in a letter to his parents, "described his journey to the Illinois and to Post Vincennes, mentioning what he met of interest among the savages,"‡ but all our efforts to secure it have been in vain. It was, very likely, destroyed with many similar documents of importance for the history of that interesting mis-

* Letter of Rev. Nerinckx in the Bollandist collection.

† See "Life of Bishop Flaget," by Archbishop Spalding, pg 119.

‡ Autograph letter of Rev. Nerinckx to his parents, dated 1807.

sion. The following account, which he sent to Bishop Carroll,* gives us a faint idea of what the venerable Father Rivet, who died at Post Vincennes in 1804, must have suffered in that neglected station: "I have visited, in company with Father Badin, the catholics at Post Vincennes. The trip took us about a month. We found them like unto sheep astray and almost perishing; their total destruction seems certain, unless a helping hand be extended to them. They are very bad people, . . . unmindful of the commandments of the church with regard to the observance of feasts, of fasts and abstinence; in a word, there is 'neither beauty nor comeliness, but destruction and unhappiness are in their ways!' I think there are about eighty families at the Post, but many more are scattered in the neighborhood. They desire very much to have a priest who would help them in their distress, although I am afraid they will not listen to him. They are a lazy voluptuous set, and the position of a priest among them will necessarily be trying, desolate, and sad. Father Rivet succeeded, however, in putting the temporal concerns of the mission on a good footing. The governor of the place offers his help to secure to a resident priest $200 a year, which sum the government allowed to Rev. Rivet. But I would rather refuse the offer, because I have not the least doubt that the allowance is hurtful to the freedom of religion, as but too plainly ap-

* Letter of 1806. Baltimore MSS.

pears from the papers left in the house of the deceased priest.

"Besides these residents, there are two Indian tribes, the *Miamis* and the *Loups*, who seem to be well-disposed and give hopes for a great many conversions. The former, a very populous tribe, count one thousand five hundred able-bodied warriors; the latter, eight hundred souls. The Loups have already a church, in which they come together on Sundays and holy days, to have the catechism explained to them by two laymen paid for the purpose. They live about four hundred miles from Vincennes; the Miamis are in their vicinity. I have, before this, offered myself for any of their missions, if agreeable to my superiors; and I hereby renew my offer to your Lordship, although I must acknowledge that, notwithstanding my good will to help my neighbor, I should rather seek a solitude in which to pass the remainder of my days in tears and lamentations, in expectation of the severe judgment. Yet, I repeat it most emphatically, I would even insist upon my being sent to some of these abandoned people, were it not that I am absolutely unfit for the position. It seems also urgent to erect a Bishopric in some of these missions, in order to put a stop to the many difficulties and indecision of these people, who, living at such an enormous distance from their pastor, know not what to hold as right or wrong. A Bishop would soon set all things to right, and being here, would very soon remove all the obsta-

cles in the way of our Holy Faith, and be better able to judge what means would be the best and the most practical to foster Religion."

Upon returning to St. Stephen's, Father Nerinckx found a letter from Bishop Carroll, conveying the sad intelligence of the death of Rev. De Cuyper, who had died in Georgetown, whilst preparing to leave for Kentucky. This was a heavy blow to the zealous priest, who had set his heart upon the scheme of a mission of his countrymen. "I have greatly regretted," he writes in answer to the Prelate, June 2, 1806, "the loss of Rev. De Cuyper to myself and people; especially so, because the sad occurrence is likely to prevent my countrymen from undertaking the journey; other circumstances seem, moreover, to foretell that all my endeavors to establish a Belgian mission will be in vain. I would never have presumed to conceive the plan, but that I desired to profit, in as much as my own mediocrity would allow, of the services of men seemingly chosen by Almighty God for that very purpose. But it is the work of God; His holy will be done!"

Determined to leave nothing undone, in order to secure the success of his undertaking, and the lasting benefit of an able and numerous body of priests to the Kentucky mission, he again wrote to Belgium, urging his friends to come out without delay. "I am convinced," he says, "that no priest, who has any of the zeal of his vocation and who carefully considers our position here,

can in any way get rid of the obligation of, I do not say coming, but flying to our help, unless the most weighty reasons order otherwise. However, in these, our days, the judgments of God on his Church are so terrible as they are wonderful. So many regions where to carry the Gospel! So many nations ready to embrace it, who never had the chance to do so, or lost it. So many priests who on the day of their ordination received the Holy Ghost, with the injunction of going forth and baptizing; and yet trying (but in vain) to find legitimate excuses to justify their sloth! And where Religion is established, so many persons so very indifferent to it, that what is left of it is scarcely worthy of that name! . . . May the good God, always merciful in his unfathomable designs, have pity on our poor and needy people, and vouchsafe that we be not numbered among the condemned crowd!

"In the midst of such painful and serious difficulties, you can easily imagine what discouraging thoughts assail me, when, in my rare moments of leisure, I ponder over the present revolution, sweeping over my family and country; but especially when I revert my thoughts upon myself, and behold so poor and unfit a man, with means so inadequate, charged with so great and so multifarious duties, in the midst of so many perils, without hope of speedy aid! I sometimes flattered myself with the hope that a few, at least, would come to this country to work for the glory of God; and that in their consoling

company and under their holy guidance, I would be enabled to commence in earnest, correcting my defects and amending a life which passes away so fast, and will soon be mine no more. Yet in the midst of those gloomy and melancholy thoughts and trials, the good God is so merciful as to refresh his unworthy servant with some glimmering of hope and consolation. The Rev. Vicar-general Badin, whom I live with, gives me the most striking proofs of an uncommon affection, and urges me to take upon myself the administration and ownership of his house and land; but my affections and desires were never fixed on such objects heretofore, nor shall they, I trust, now take possession of my heart. I do not feel at all like coming to such a pass, although I can scarcely see how to escape the burden of that extensive and heavy congregation, really large enough for four or five earnest and zealous priests, besides remaining at the same time burdened with my own. If I make some tiresome rehearsals of my extensive labors, rest assured that the true and only reason is, that some may be moved to come, in person, to our aid, and that the other virtuous souls who can not come, may address the most fervent prayers and supplications to heaven, to obtain for me, in my bitter need and sorrow, graces and help."

We will have occasion to refer again, in the course of this biography, to the zeal with which Father Nerinckx worked to recruit missionaries

for his beloved Kentucky. His was indeed a zeal which knew no bounds. Not satisfied with working day and night for the salvation of souls, he did all in his power to multiply his good works by inducing others to do the same; and we have already seen that he was the first to think of asking a Bishop for Kentucky.

Bishop Carroll, who had thought of Father Badin for that responsible position, and had conceived a very high opinion of the virtue and sound judgment of Rev. Nerinckx, wrote to him asking his opinion on the subject; and the humble man very reluctantly gave it in the following letter,* dated June 2, 1806: "It is but right, if it can be done, that a man be chosen, acquainted with the country and with the customs of the people, like the one the selection of whom your Lordship submitted to my judgment. His science, in both human and divine letters, seems to me to be above the mediocre, and it would, without a doubt, be much greater and deeper if time and occupation allowed him to improve it. He has good reasoning powers, fair judgment, and prudence. I believe him to be sound in doctrine and ready to listen to the decision of a superior. His zeal is more than sufficiently known; it has, perhaps, a little too much of the French fervor, is of more than necessary rigidity, and, if tempered with a little of the honey of kindness, would be more palatable

* Baltimore MSS.

to his people and more successful in curing inveterate sinners and loathsome wounds. This is the reason he is not so universally liked, although it is also to be acknowledged that some of the less pious people are difficult to deal with, indocile, ungrateful, lax and without manners, quarrelsome, and indifferent to Religion, the very name of which they cause to be blasphemed. He handles temporal affairs smartly enough; he loves piety, from the exercise of which he is perhaps a little prevented because of his love for society, which he has, however, rarely frequented since my arrival. If, however, he does not refuse invitations with as much reluctance as I would, he does it because of the good he hopes from them . . . These are the things I have been able to note down, and which need not keep him away from that terrible ministry . . . For the rest, I do not know of any one more fit for the place . . . But I beg of your Lordship that my opinion in the matter should have as little weight as possible."

Writing, in 1807, on the same subject to a friend,* Rev. Nerinckx gives the following rather racy and graphic sketch of old Father Badin, at that time in the bloom of his years: "Kentucky has not yet its Bishop, and our people are very desirous to know who he will be. A great many conjectures are made. Many are of opinion that my host, the Vicar-general, may be appointed, in which case my burden would,

* Rev. Nerinckx' autograph.

if possible, be doubled. In fact, I would then be obliged to assume his congregation, which is two thousand strong. Even now he urges me to do so, so that he might visit the more distant stations, a thing also very necessary. The Vicar-general Badin is a Frenchman, born in Orleans, thirty-nine years of age, of small stature, well-built, of pleasant character, good morals, and great piety; gray, strong, and healthy, standing the hardships of missionary life well, the first priest ordained by the Bishop of Baltimore, well qualified for business affairs, and, in my own opinion, for the Episcopal dignity, and, so to say, the founder of the church in Kentucky."

That Father Badin was not appointed, was perhaps due to the fact, that he, himself, went to Baltimore in the Spring of 1807, and recommended for the position, Rev. Benedict Joseph Flaget, a distinguished Sulpician, of burning zeal and tender piety, who had come with him to America, in 1792, and who, having attended Post Vincennes until 1794, and spent sixteen years on the American mission, seemed to him fitted, in a particular manner, for the trying office of the Episcopacy in this pioneer country. Subsequent events proved Father Badin's choice to be as wise as Father Nerinckx' might have proved to be.

CHAPTER VII.

1805–1807.

THE TRAPPISTS.—FATHER NERINCKX FORESEES THEIR FAILURE.—HIS DESIRE TO JOIN THEM.—OBEDIENCE BETTER THAN SACRIFICE.—ST. STEPHEN'S.—HOLY MARY'S.—BELLS.—CHURCH FURNITURE.—DANVILLE.—ST. CHARLES' CHURCH.—STATE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN KENTUCKY IN 1807.—REV. NERINCKX' BODILY SUFFERINGS.—HIS MISSIONARY FIELD OF LABOR.

THE Trappists, whom Father Nerinckx had left on the banks of the Ohio, in his eagerness to reach his destination, arrived in Kentucky in the Fall of 1805. They temporarily settled at the foot of Rohan's Knob, on Pottinger's Creek, about a mile from the church of Holy Cross.

"The Trappists," writes Father Nerinckx in November, 1805, "have had a sad and expensive journey; most of them have been sick, and two, to whom I gave the last Sacraments have died in their present residence. They are: Father Basil, who had been appointed prior, a man of great holiness, formerly a canon in France, and Father Dominic who had been a Carthusian. The others are all convalescent or entirely well. Had I remained with them, I

would have arrived here about a month and a half later, and most likely sick with the same fever. They are now four priests, among whom my traveling companion, four lay brothers, and some students and children. They are poorly situated; St. Bernard will have to help them, for, in my opinion, Father Urban, their Superior, is not the man in the right place. Owing to sickness, they did not yet determine upon a place of settlement. I gave them a relic of St. Bernard."

The Fathers remained on Pottinger's Creek until the early spring of 1807, when "during the severest spell of an extremely cold winter which had set in before Christmas, thirteen Trappists left our neighborhood," writes Father Nerinckx, "to settle on a part of a tract of land (in Casey county), which, if I am not mistaken, they bought at $2.00 an acre. Among them are three Belgians: Mr. Donche, a pastor of the Diocese of Bruges,* and two lay-brothers, one from the environs of Ghent, the other from Thienen.† There is also among them a worthy

* He was a very learned Canon of Bruges and joined the Trappists in Darfeld.

† One of these was Henry Rysselman, who remained with the Trappists until they broke up their establishment at the "Monk's Mound," in 1813, to return to their monastery in France, when he went to Georgetown College, and joined the Jesuits, among whom he died, June 30, 1857. He often spoke of his sojourn with the Trappists in *Casey county*, in 1809. Archbishop Spalding does not mention the Casey county establishment. Mr. John Wethington, a reliable gentlemen whose father settled on Casey Creek about the year 1802, states that many old people of

Canadian pastor. The Superior who accompanied them is a young man of holy life, although once a soldier. His name is Father Marie Joseph. He was a grenadier during the French Revolution, and, having orders to shoot a priest, he refused to do so, and fled from the army to become a religious.*

"Other lands have been offered gratis to the Trappists, but they did not accept of them, either because of the bad situation or for other reasons best known to themselves. They will be established about forty miles from us, and will be obliged to open a new clearing of between seven and eight miles long in the wilderness. They hope that new colonies will join them from Europe, and it is even rumored that their Abbot intends to come to our regions."†

Trained in the school of strict seminarian discipline, and purified, like gold, in the fire of adversity and persecution, Father Nerinckx

that county still remember when the Trappist monks were there.

* Father Marie Joseph Dunand, the Trappist prior, remained in America after his brethren had returned to Europe. He first attended the missions west of the Mississippi, and resided at St. Charles, Mo., where Bishop Flaget visited him in July, 1814. Accustomed to the strict discipline of the Trappist convent, Father Dunand was often at war with his rather lukewarm flock. He afterward had charge of the congregation at Florissant, until about 1820, when Rev. Lacroix (see *infra*) was appointed to succeeded him, on account of dissensions among the people which the former could not settle. The prior returned to France that same year.

†Autograph letter of Rev. Nerinckx to his parents, dated February, 1807.

found an especial attraction in the rigid and penitential life of the Sons of St. Bernard, who, striving for perfection, deprived themselves of all the transient pleasures of this world, in order to secure the crown of eternal life. His was a reticent and serious nature, which would have delighted in the solitude of a cloister or a Thebais, but which, on that very account, fitted him all the better for the ungrateful work of our early missions. It would sustain him against the lack of human consolations, and prove his salvation, where others with more sociable dispositions, and more brilliant qualifications of mind, would not have been able to bear the hardships and disappointments, and would have given up the contest. Many need the salutary restraints of a conventual life, which, because it deprives them of their own will, securely directs them in the path of religious perfection and scientific pursuit, where they shine forth with undiminished luster; left to their own unrestrained impulses, they would soon swerve from the royal, but thorny, way, to follow the broad and flowery road that leads to perdition. The sad experience of our own days was not needed, to prove the failure of some monastic men, whom conventual discipline and vows had forced into a well-earned prominence; in their convents they were examples of religious perfection to their less gifted brethren, but, as soon as they freed themselves from the salutary yoke, they fell from the zenith of their grandeur, to

sink, despised, into merited oblivion. The glittering meteor shooting away from the heavenly firmament which sets forth its splendor, soon merges in vapory nothingness, or falls to the earth a blackened areolite. We greatly admire the neatly trimmed vessels, which, rounded off in soft contours and pleasing lines, stately and securely glide on the smooth waters of our inland bays; they do well in their place, keeping in shore, or sailing along on the broad bosom of the great rivers. But woe to them if they venture out upon the open sea! Before the angry waves have a chance to hurl them into the bottomless abyss of the deep, the breakers on the coast display the sad wreck of their once noble hull. Men, world-renowned, in the haven of a convent, have had their reputation dashed to pieces on the fog-concealed rocks besetting the raging sea of sad life in the world. But, Father Nerinckx, how much soever inclined to profit by the cloister's protecting safeguard, stood not in need of it to protect his virtue, or aid his progress in the science of the Saints. Like a stanch ship, the bold outlines of which, less pleasing to the eye, but hiding within their rugged forms beams strong and firm, bespeak her strength against the most violent outbursts of the Atlantic storms, he could safely brave the tempest, and battle successfully against wind and waves.

Our missionary was too much needed in the missions to think of securing his own salvation,

whilst seemingly neglecting that of others, who were famishing for want of spiritual food. He was imbued with too much of the spirit of zeal which animated St Ignatius, to take to the life-boat when a pilot was needed at the wheel; and, upon the advice of Bishop Carroll to whom he had written on the subject, and who did not approve of his entering a religious house, he generously sacrificed his own inclinations to the welfare of his flock. "I must acknowledge," he writes,* "that the manner of living of the Trappists has touched me in so far, that hardly any thing but the great scarcity of priests to attend to the wants of the catholics, withholds me from asking a place among them. Happy men, indeed, who, notwithstanding the sneers of a world full of deceit, know how to find charms in tribulation, joy in suffering, wealth in poverty, and an abundance of all things where the blinded worldlings not even deign to cast a glance. When you see and study their lives, you think you have finally found the infallible means of securing the salvation of your soul. What holy and modest joy do you not read in their countenance! How eloquent is their silence! How heart-stirring their chant! In a word, how violently and sweetly does their whole mode of life attract you! *Vere haec est generatio quaerentium Dominum!* . . ."

No wonder if Father Nerinckx deplored the removal of these men, whom he looked up to as

* Father Nerinckx' autograph letter. *Sup. Cit*

the very models of christian perfection, and whose way of living naturally made them his friends. Being accustomed to sacrifice his own likings to the good of religion, he deplored it especially because, with his usual keen perception and bright intellectual foresight, the man of God anticipated that no good would come from that continual change of place. In his estimation, men who made perfection their daily business should have relied more on the providence of God, and less on the beauty of situation or fertility of soil, than the over-zealous Father Urban did. In his anxiety to secure a favorable and permanent establishment for his community, this good man was constantly on the road and away from his convent, and his brethren could not but suffer from the protracted absences of their Superior. The fact that they were to commence a new foundation without the presence of their prelate to enforce the rules, and to instill into them, from the very beginning, the spirit of fervor, which the difficulties of a new establishment must necessarily have rendered very hard to foster, was surely no help to maintain the strictness of the institute, and must have suggested many and seemingly plausible excuses not to enforce it. Rev. Nerinckx wrote in that sense, to Bishop Carroll in 1806, a letter* which he sent to him through Father Urban: "The affairs of the Trappists are improving slowly enough. I fear the ruin of that Congre-

* Baltimore MSS.

gation, unless they receive reinforcements of men and money, both of which are promised from Belgium. It seems to me that it would succeed better, if, as I suggested several times to him, Rev. Urban commenced from humble foundations, and were not so over-anxious about the selection of a convenient spot. I am afraid that his continual excursions will drain all his resources, besides being very prejudicial to the good name and fame of the Trappists."

But the Rev. Urban did not wish to listen to the disinterested suggestions of the missionary. Scarcely had the prior, Father Marie Joseph, settled his little band in Casey county, when his superior, busy as ever in quest of better quarters, arrived at the monastery with the unwelcome intelligence of another removal. He had obtained from Bishop Carroll the pastoral care of the catholics scattered on both sides of the Mississippi, and came to break up the new establishment.

This news was a terrible blow to the earnest and energetic Father Marie Joseph, and helped no doubt the determination he came to, when the Trappist establishment was again broken up in 1813 and transplanted back to France, to sever his connection with so fickle a superior and to remain in the American mission. That he had reason to regret the step of his superior, although, like a true religious, he did not question its propriety, clearly appears from one of

Father Nerinckx' letters,* describing the result of the poor prior's zeal, as early as the Summer of 1807: "I lately visited my St. Bernard's parish, and stopped over night with the admirable monks of La Trappe. They own around there, thirty-four miles from the priests' land (so people call Father Badin's plantation), about one thousand five hundred acres, which cost them on an average $4.00 an acre. That territory belonged to Holy Mary's parish, but it has been erected into a distinct mission, called St. Bernard's. Part of that large Trappist farm is very good land, well situated, cut by several streams and a rather wide brook, upon the banks of which they are already erecting a saw-mill—a good illustration of what early monks have done—they do all the work among themselves. They have received two novices—an Irishman and an American; and news has reached them that five Canadian priests intend to join them.

"I found fourteen members in the community, lodged in a double frame cabin about as large as a ten-horse stable. That structure, which hardly keeps out the rain, is dormitory, refectory, and church; a space is set apart for the lay brothers, and there is a small apartment for storing provisions, in which I lodged with my guide. The Fathers and Brothers sleep on the bare floor; I had a bag of oats to rest upon. They retire at eight P. M., after many long and edifying evening prayers. They rise at one

* Letter of Rev. Nerinckx, in the Bollandist Library, Brussels.

o'clock A. M., and spend the time until four, singing the Office, saying Mass, reciting prayers, etc., when they go out to work. They do not break their fast until twelve A. M., and on fast days, and during Lent, until three P. M.

"Father Urban, the Trappist Superior, is often our guest, and Mr. Badin has been a great help to him. I gave the last Sacraments to two of his companions, in our house, a few hours before their death. He expects some new arrivals from Europe.

"These Trappists have adopted over twenty children from the best class of our catholics, whom they bind themselves to educate and to keep until their twenty-first year without any compensation. They leave them free to learn a trade, or to take up the studies they have the most inclination for, and we anticipate great fruit to Church and state from that good work. I have closely watched their manner of life, and I felt a longing desire to join them, . . . but the Bishop of Baltimore, whom I blindly obey, orders me not to exchange the useful work of the secular ministry for a penitential solitude. . . ."

No wonder, therefore, if Father Nerinckx, alarmed at Rev. Urban's fickleness, wrote again to Bishop Carroll, in March, 1808:* "I understand that Rev. Wouters was very desirous of coming out to me, a thing which is just now impossible, since he joined the Society (of Jesus). I love the Society sincerely, and I believe that

* Baltimore MSS.

you are in great want of priests there, but I can not admit that you are in greater need than we are here. As to my idea of leading a cenobitical or retired life, away from the inevitable and real perils of the ministry, I have not given it up. But, owing to your counsels, I have set it aside for the present, convinced that obedience is better than sacrifice. In the second place, because the want of priests is so real, that it is, perhaps, better for this mission to have one like me than none at all. Thirdly (and I am very sorry to have to state it), because that so justly, and so universally, celebrated congregation of Trappists is just now in a very alarming condition. Their temporal affairs are so badly managed or so persistently upset by adverse circumstances, that, in the opinion of prudent men, the institution must necessarily fall to the ground, unless it be upheld by miracles. If they were prudent managers, they would surely act otherwise than they do. The breaking up of this convent will undoubtedly prove disastrous not only to the Order itself, but also to Religion; a sad prophecy which I gave already utterance to, when, being your Lordship's guest in Georgetown, I remarked that I could not think of any other remedy against the threatening evil, but to provide a more prudent head for that body. I do not know whether I should, or can, be more definite; but my assertions can be easily proved, and authentic information will perhaps be sent to your Lordship by the proper men."

However, Father Urban carried out his plans, and "on the third Sunday after Easter, 1809, the Trappists embarked, leaving in Kentucky a very small suite with Rev. Urban, who intended to follow them in the fall."* They ascended the Mississippi river from Cairo in row-boats, and entering the Missouri river they landed near the Charbonniere, about ten miles above the confluence of the Missouri with the Mississippi. They crossed the bluffs and settled in the village of Florissant, which is two miles from their place of landing, and in the direction of St. Louis. Here, Mr. John Mullanphy, an Irish gentleman who had moved to Missouri from Frankfort, Ky., a few years previous to their arrival, generously gave them the use of his own residence, which had formerly been the dwelling of the Spanish *Intendente* or Governor. It was then the largest and best built house of that region, being made of cedar logs planted upright on sleepers and braced together, and it contained three large rooms. When torn down some eight years ago its timbers were still perfectly sound.

Shortly after their arrival, the monks purchased a farm in "Looking-Glass Prairie," Illinois, including the two finest, out of a system of more than forty Indian mounds on Cahokia Creek. They moved from Florissant to this farm in 1810 and settled on the smaller of the two mounds purchased by them, where they

* Letter of Father Nerinckx, May 25, 1809.

erected temporary cabins, intending to build an abbey on the larger mound to the east, at a later time; it is the latter mound, on the now Collinsville plank-road, six miles from the east end of the great bridge over the Mississippi at St. Louis, and one mile from Indian Lake, which is, to this day, called "Monk's Mound." But sickness rapidly decimated their numbers, and the restless Superior finally started back to France, in 1813, with the few survivors who were willing to follow him in this his last peregrination. Several members of the Order remained in America; Father Marie Joseph Dunand, the prior, accepted care of souls in St. Charles' congregation, Missouri; Brother Rysselman joined the Jesuits, and the other Belgian brother went to Bardstown, where he followed his trade as a clockmaker.

Father Nerinckx had hoped that the Trappists might help Rev. Badin and himself in the ministerial duties of the mission which was committed to their care; hence, he had hailed their advent in the wilds of Kentucky with great delight. Seeing that his hopes in that direction were to be partially frustrated now, and, in his opinion, totally so at no distant future, he bravely settled down to work with his accustomed energy.

As has been stated in a previous chapter, Rev. Nerinckx arrived at St. Stephen's, Marion county, on the 18th of July, 1805. Father Badin received him with open arms, and re-

quested him to make his house his own, so that they might work with more harmony and system for the general good of the widely scattered missions. The request was readily complied with. *St. Stephen's*, so called from the small domestic chapel which Father Badin had erected in his log cabin in honor of his patron Saint, may well be looked upon as the cradle of catholicity in Kentucky. Here the veteran apostles of Kentucky, Stephen T. Badin, the first priest ever ordained in the United States, at the hands of the noble and patriotic John Carroll, its first Bishop, and Charles Nerinckx, the intrepid pioneer, resided for many years. From here shone forth the supernatural light of faith which was to illuminate the whole North-west. From here flowed all the spiritual graces which, in as many years as it took centuries in the Old World, worked miracles in the hearts of men, and made of "the dark and bloody ground" the most lovely region of the New World, covering the sloping sides of its hills, and the fertile clearings of its primeval forests, like unto a crown studded with jewels, with numerous convents, where pure and holy virgins, the first and native fruits of the prolific zeal of its apostles, offered to the Lord God their sanctified vigils and pious prayers. Here, the Patriarch of the West, the gentle and holy Benedict Joseph Flaget, the first Bishop of Kentucky, having like his Divine Master, not a stone whereon to repose his head, made his place

of abode for many a month. Here he commenced a theological seminary, consisting of two rooms, which Father Badin shared with the Bishop and his brother priests, and a loft or attic which the poorly-fed and overworked students crowded at night, to catch a few hours' rest from the bodily and mental toils of the well-spent day. Here stands to this day, on the very spot where its venerable Founder first dwelled, the Mother-house of Loretto, destined to keep sacred the virgin soil their Father first trod, and to perpetuate the designs of Providence upon it, by sending from its walls colony upon colony of devoted sisters, to shed the light of faith upon the children of the far Western wilderness.

Within the first year of his residence at St. Stephen's, Father Nerinckx took possession of the house at *Holy Mary's* of the Rolling Fork, the property of which Rev. Badin had conveyed to him notwithstanding his reiterated refusals.* As stated in a previous chapter, a farm of ninety-four acres had been purchased there by Father Fournier, and he had made it his residence. "At the Rolling Fork," writes Father Nerinckx, in November, 1805, "there is a frame house two stories high, provided with two brick chimneys, an uncommon feature around here. This house and three or four frame shanties were built at the expense of Rev. Fournier, who lived here but six years. A farm of ninety-four

*Father Nerinckx' autograph letter to his parents, dated 1807.

acres, a third of which is cleared, belongs to this mission. A poor old man, who seeks to live with me, offers me about ninety-four acres more, and the parishioners are willing to help me to clear part of it. As yet there is no church; but, hearing that I intended to settle there, the people hastened to put up, near the bend in the river, a frame building, about the site of which they had been long disputing. This mission numbers about four hundred souls. . . . I have changed the name of the church at the Rolling Fork to that of Holy Mary, on the feast of the Holy Name of Mary [September, 1805], and enriched it with a relic of the Blessed Virgin."

Father Nerinckx began the erection of a new church, the first placed under the invocation of the Blessed Virgin in Kentucky, as soon as he had taken up his residence at the Fork, thus dedicating to the Holy Mother, whom he so tenderly loved, his first work in the New World.* "On the 15th of November, 1805," he writes,† "just one year having elapsed since my arrival in America, I had the happiness of laying the corner-stone of Holy Mary's church. Eternal thanks to our Blessed Mother for that event, which more than repays the long-forgotten difficulties that I went through during my tiresome journey. If I can meet the expense, I intend to build an addition of three rooms to that church, and I trust that some good Flemish

* Rev. Nerinckx' last will, dated 1820.

† MSS. Letter, begun September, 1805, and ended May 16, 1806.

priests will come to my help; when once here, they can either remain and work with me, or go further in the country. However, times are hard. Money is so scarce, that I can not collect the amount necessary for the purchase of lumber; yet, $50 will cover the bill. The church will cost about $400, which I intend to pay in kind. Lumber costs next to nothing; but iron is not used, not even on doors; these last turn on wooden hinges and are provided with wooden latches; a common carpenter earns a dollar a day. Glass is more expensive; I am asked $1.00 for four common-sized window panes. . . . There being little money, people pay in trade, and the current coins are cut up and divided in pieces to suit value and exigencies of business.

"So far, this mission is poor, and the country very sparsely settled; but I trust that, with help and time, it will become self-sustaining. Bordering on one of the most populous catholic congregations of Kentucky, Holy Mary's must grow and would be a desirable site for a community of priests, whence we could attend to distant missions. However, if I receive sufficient help, I intend to begin a new missionary settlement with over fifty families who are ready to follow me at any time.

"The statue of the Blessed Virgin, that I brought from Belgium, will be placed in Holy Mary's church. A young lady convert, who gains her living by her handiwork, was so taken up with that statue, that she gave to the church

a fine linen alb, the material of which she had bought for a new dress."

The families which were the most numerous and influential at the Rolling Fork were the Spaldings and Abels. Father Deparcq, Rev. Nerinckx' countryman and successor, subsequently rebuilt the church of brick.

About this same year, *Bardstown* sems to have sprung into prominence, for Rev. Nerinckx writes, in 1805: "Mr. Coppingen, an Irishman without children, who intends to give all he makes to the church, is ready to settle thirteen miles from here, in one of our most important missions, *Beardts' town*,* where he has bought thirty-six acres. We think of building a chapel or church and a residence for the future bishop of Kentucky in that town." Major Erkuries Beatty stopped in Bardstown during his western tour in 1786, and writes of it, under date August 28th: † "Bardstown . . . forty miles from Louisville. . . . This village is near Salt River toward its head, and consists of fifty or sixty log houses, regularly laid out, and pretty well built, the capital of Nelson county, as Louisville is of Jefferson."

Father Nerinckx also visited *Louisville*, which Major Beatty notices, August 15, 1786,‡ as fol-

* *Sic.* It was called *Bairdstown*, from its founder, Mr. Baird; and many old people still spell it that way. *Bardstown* is a later spelling, more euphonious, but less correct.

† Cfr. The Magazine of American History, April, 1877, pg. 242.

‡ Ibid. pg. 239.

lows: "A little below the Diamond or Six Mile Island, Louisville appears in view, pretty, as the river is straight and wide. . . . Found it situate on a second bank, very high; just at the head of the rapids; it consists of about fifty or sixty houses a good deal scattered, chiefly log, some frame. A good strong fort here during the war, now going to decay." Says Father Nerinckx, in 1806: "The number of catholics will undoubtedly rapidly increase in Louisville if they have a good priest, and there are just now great hopes of building a church without delay, if they can have a priest to visit them from time to time."

That same year, 1806, Father Nerinckx erected *St. Charles'* church, the fourth built in Kentucky; it was a modest structure of hewed logs with room attached for his temporary residence, and situated on Hardin's Creek, Marion county. Over six hundred people attended that church in 1806.* He had named this mission, in September, 1805, after St. Charles Borromeo, his patron Saint, whose life he was constantly reading and meditating on, and with whose spirit he was thoroughly imbued. The zeal for reform exhibited by that great bishop, Father Nerinckx constantly strived to imitate in the correction of abuses among his people, but more especially in his own austere and mortified manner of life. "Before he built St. Charles' church, Mass was said, marriages and baptisms

* Letter of May 16, 1806.

were performed, at the house of Henry Hagan, some two miles to the south of St. Charles'. Father Nerinckx had charge of the station at Hagan's house, which, as well as St. Charles' afterward, was known as *Hardin's Creek*, from the vicinity of both places to the little stream of that name. Father Nerinckx, when he built a church, made different persons subscribe one or two hewn logs, of prescribed dimensions, and deliver them on the spot. Then all assembled with him to have the 'house raising,' as it was styled. The fitting of the prepared logs to their places, was the work of one, or at most, two days. Father Nerinckx was able to lift with two men opposite to him at the hand-spike. As the people had great veneration for him and were even in awe of his spirit, he could accomplish any thing he undertook with them."* Pulled down in 1832 to make room for the new grave-yard, the humble log church was replaced by a brick one, eighty feet long by forty wide, which the zealous Father Deparcq finished the same year, together with a new brick house begun four years previous. The old log house in which Father Nerinckx resided, when, near this very spot, old Loretto was struggling for existence under his paternal but severe discipline, is standing yet, a relic of the hard but glorious past; it was until lately the refuge of a poor negro family. Father Fermont, the resident pastor of the place, enlarged the church to a

* Letter of Rev. Walter H. Hill, S. J., December, 1875.

length of one hundred and sixteen feet, and added a transept of fifty-four feet in width, during the Summer of 1874.

Whilst these works were going on, Father Nerinckx received, in answer to his urgent requests for help from Belgium, a check of $100 for the missions, and another of $105 for himself, through Mr. Dewolf, of Antwerp. Having the glory of the house of God at heart, and anxious to introduce into Kentucky the good old customs of catholic countries, he immediately ordered, in Baltimore, three new bells for the then existing churches. But being advised that this sum was all he could expect for some time to come, and having nothing to hope for from his poor parishioners, he wrote to Bishop Carroll, June 2, 1806:* "If the three bells I ordered are not yet bought, I would prefer to have only one, for I see I will have to bear all the expenses myself. Please, also, send me a bell of about $30 for the church where I reside, and let the rest be spent in buying pious books, catechisms, prayer books, etc., of which people are in great need here. I also wish a Holy Bible for myself. Be so kind as to direct it all to Mr. De Gallon, a baker in the hamlet of Louisville, on the banks of the Ohio river. These drafts being all I can expect, because of the extraordinary efforts they are making to help the Jesuits and the Trappists, I have thought it better to spend the money for what will tend most to the glory

* Baltimore MSS.

of God. I will try to be little solicitous about myself, for He who always took such fatherly care of me, notwithstanding my unworthiness, will never abandon me. It seems there is little hope of obtaining more missionaries from Belgium; they need the zealous men themselves, and we do not want the lukewarm. Some generous friends of mine are going to send two or three trunks of vestments, the distribution of which they will leave to your Lordship; I beg that you will not forget us, for our people are deficient both in means and in good will."

The humble priest did surely not exaggerate the poverty of his missionary stations, for, as we gather from a letter written to his parents, in 1807:* "Only one of our churches, Holy Cross, has an altar. Not one has more than one chasuble, and none has a linen alb except those I provided myself; whilst middling good Irish linen, the only quality obtainable here, costs $1.50. I procured already four chalices; and the best one, which I brought from Belgium, I intend to offer, for the glory of God, to the one who will be selected as the first Bishop of this region; he will undoubtedly make a better and holier use of it than I would."

However, his love for the beauty of the house of the Lord suggested to him means to adorn and beautify his missionary stations. Here, as in Herffelingen, he had the secret of attracting

*Autograph letter dated Ash Wednesday, 1807.

the children, and, in 1807, he built, with their help, an altar and pulpit in St. Charles' church; these articles were inlaid with different kinds of woods, after a plan which Father Nerinckx himself designed, and cost $130. "Myself," he writes, "and the children who made their first communion this year, pay part of it; the younger children all pay something in thread or corn: so that it is again with the children I begin and succeed. Most of them are very anxious to contribute something, and gain the good will of their parents so thoroughly, that, God helping, they will all be enlisted in the good cause. The most discouraging feature here, is, that when you have mastered the difficulties in one place, the same or greater obstacles await you in four or five others. Well, God's holy will be done!"

During the year 1807, the first brick church of Kentucky, built with the generous help of the non-catholics of the town, was finished in *Danville* by the joint exertions of the two missionaries. "Danville," says Major Beatty, August 30, 1786,* . . . "this is forty-five miles from Bardstown, and lies near the waters of Dick's river, which empties into the Kentucky, and also near the headwaters of a branch of Salt river. The capital of Mercer county, and where all the public business of the county is done; it being the most central place—the town is new, about forty log houses in it, neatly built, and a frame

* The Historical Magazine, edited by J. A. Stevens, 1877, pg. 242.

court-house; appears to be some genteel people here; a pretty good tavern kept by Mr. Barber."

Lexington was another of the missionaries' stations, which the major visited, August 31, 1786, and notices as follows:† "Lexington. . . . This is thirty-five miles from Danville, the largest of any of the villages in the settlement, and the oldest. I suppose there are ninety or one hundred houses in it, all log, but some neatly built. It lies upon the headwaters of the branches of the Kentucky, and is a good deal scattered. A small brook runs through the town, which is supplied by a number of fine springs, which supply the town with water that is very good. . . ."

The people, without distinction of creed, every-where welcomed the priests, and gave them substantial aid, as Father Nerinckx testifies in his journal, in the year 1807: "Some merchants of Bardstown, Lexington, Danville, Louisville, etc., where catholic churches were built, contributed $50, $100, $200, and $400, although non-catholics. In *Hopkinsville*, after a sermon which Father Badin preached in my presence, the non-catholic listeners called a meeting of citizens at the court-house (there were not half a dozen catholics in the place), circulated a subscription list for the building of a catholic church and a Loretto school, and within a day and a half they had four thousand acres

† Idem. pg. 243.

of land pledged, some giving as high as five hundred acres, and promising more if necessary, which, at the low valuation of five dollars an acre, would have netted $20,000. The gift was not accepted, the Loretto convent being unable to spare any of its members. We intend to build a brick tower on the Danville church, which, although small, will be the first tower in Kentucky."

Besides Holy Mary's and St. Charles', Father Nerinckx attended St. Ann's, on Cartwright's Creek, in the now Washington county. "The latter church was situated about ten miles northeast of St. Stephen's, and was a wooden fabric of logs. A grave-yard was attached to it, being the second burying-ground in the catholic mission of Kentucky, as St. Ann's was the second church; Holy Cross chapel and grave-yard, where the two French priests were buried, being the first. Mass continued to be said at St. Ann's by Father Nerinckx till 1806; the Dominicans then attended it as a station from their new church of St. Rose, until 1819, when the tottering old church was taken down, and the congregation attached to it was merged in that of St. Rose's. Some traces of its ruins are still visible two miles from St. Rose's." *

The following list of missions, made by Father Nerinckx in 1807,† will give us an accurate idea

* Letter of Rev. Walter H. Hill, December, 1875.

† Letter in Bollandist Library, Brussels.

of the state of catholicity in Kentucky in the beginning of this century:

"Previous to Mr. Badin's arrival here there was not a church, and when I came not one was known by name. We now have the pleasure of distinguishing the most important by the name of a Saint under whose protection they are placed:

"1. *Holy Cross*, previously known as Pottinger's Creek, has over two hundred families, and is four miles from our home.

"2. *St. Stephen's*, the place where we dwell, and named after Mr. Badin's patron Saint, has about forty families.

"3. *St. Ann*, eight miles from here, has two hundred families; so called after relics of that Saint which I brought from Europe.

"4. *St. Charles*, named in honor of my patron Saint, whose relics I deposited there, has ninety families and is situated six miles from here.

"5. *Holy Mary's*, named in honor of the Blessed Virgin, has seventy families and is distant thirteen miles.

"6. *St. Joseph*, Bardstown, which is destined to be the Episcopal See, is thirteen miles from here and has fifty families.

"7. *St. Michael*, has fifty families and is twenty-four miles from here.

"All these have churches, though only frame ones.

"8. *St. Thomas*, eleven miles from here, has thirty families, but no church. An old married

couple living here, are said to reserve their property for the church; it consists of four hundred acres, estimated at $5,000.

"9. *St. Clare*, twenty-four miles from here, has seventeen families. Every thing in readiness for a church and one hundred acres for the priest.

"10. *St. Anthony*, eighty miles from here, has twenty-five families, no church, but three hundred acres for a priest.

"11. *St. Louis*, in the city of Louisville on the Ohio, where there is much trade and wickedness, has twenty families. The French are the worst portion of the people, and few catechisms in that language are bought, few confessions heard, but plenty of curses uttered. There is, however, an old French dragoon of ninety years who goes monthly to his duty. . . .

"12. *St. Benedict* has fifteen families, no church, and is thirty-three miles distant.

"13. *St. Francis*, seventy-two miles from here, has fifty families, a church, a house for a priest, and fifty acres of land.

"14. *St. Peter*, Lexington, the most important city in the state, has twenty families, no church, but a house and some land. It is situated seventy miles from here.

"15. *St. Christophorus*, eighty miles from here, has twenty-five families, no church, but one hundred acres of land.

"16. *St. Patrick*, Danville, thirty miles from here, has a new, though small brick church, the

first ever built in Kentucky, but no land. The town contains few houses, but does a thriving business.

"17. *St. Bernard*, thirty-four miles from here, has eleven families, but neither church nor land.

"18. *St. John*, fifteen miles from here, has fifteen families.

"These are the named congregations. To each of these belong outside missions, where Mass is said and the Sacraments are administered.

"Father Badin attends to most of the distant missions; the congregations exclusively belonging to me are Holy Mary's, St. Charles', and St. Bernard's. Father Badin wants me to assume the care of Holy Cross and St. Stephen's, but I am already overworked. I attend occasionally the outlying missions, and the sick calls are attended to by the one who is called; I have to keep two horses to wander through these regions, and I am convinced that there are nearly as many more families as I mentioned, scattered among unbelievers, who belong nowhere because they have no priest to guide them and are ashamed to own up their belief among infidels."

Writing to Bishop Carroll that same year, Father Nerinckx stated that the duties devolving upon him in these congregations were more than he could attend to, declaring himself ready, however, to attend to any place the prelate might assign him. Bishop Carroll tried his humility and obedience to the utmost, by assign-

ing to him a district, which embraced nearly half the State of Kentucky, extending from Washington to Union county, a territory in which there are at present more than thirty organized congregations.

Nothing loth, the missionary set to work with an energy which would have put to shame the most enterprising pioneer, and which soon told on his vigorous constitution, as he confidently acknowledged in a letter to his parents:* "I feel that my strength of body is diminishing, and my vigor of mind giving way, under the constant pressure of hard work. I am frequently troubled with diarrhœa and indigestion, owing to reasons which I can not avoid: among others, long fasting and very irregular meals. Many a day, I have only one very late meal, entirely different from the food I was used to." In fact, his food was always of the coarsest kind—pork and milk was his almost daily diet;† and, as he never missed offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, no matter what had been his previous fatigues or indisposition, he was often known to ride twenty-five or thirty miles fasting in order to be able to say Mass, and he seldom broke his fast until three or four o'clock in the evening. "This," he continues, "I can not avoid, unless we obtain a good reinforcement of priests, something which seems to be in the very distant future. My complaint of fistula is often

* Letter of 1807; *Sup. Cit.*

† Letter of 1805–6; *Sup. Cit.*

renewed. We perspire a great deal in Summer, and suffer from inflammation of the bowels; and in February and March, my limbs are laid bare with blotches and blains which emit considerable water. In this, however, as in all the rest, I am resigned, thinking that it does me good."

Notwithstanding these sufferings, he was almost always on horseback. Day and night he went about from settlement to settlement, and from house to house, among the widely scattered catholics in the country, and lived henceforth on the missions which he was to fecundate by his labors, impressing upon the minds and hearts of his people that earnestness of purpose and solidity of faith which were emphatically his own. Practical and enlightened piety to this day distinguish the catholics who were the happy recipients of his instructions when children. Not only Father Nerinckx' name, but his undying spirit abides with them; and judging by these abundant fruits, the reader will admit with us, that the following account of his missionary labors is only the dim reflection of a life of toils and sufferings, which, at a distance of half a century, are more indelibly impressed upon the souls of Kentucky's noble catholics, than they will ever be on paper.

CHAPTER VIII.

1807–1808.

Catholic schools.—Father Nerinckx' zeal for the instruction of the children.—"Arms up!"—He plans the establishment of a religious community.—Its objects.—Building of a convent near St. Stephen's.—The building destroyed by fire.

When we read of the apalling privations and the herculean toils of the pioneer catholic missionaries in this, our country, and compare the results as evinced in the progress of catholicity, it is discouraging to see how many of our people have fallen away from the faith, and rendered all these labors useless, and the question naturally arises in the minds of all well-meaning persons, and especially of hard-working priests: Why is it that the superhuman efforts of our self-sacrificing missionaries are so barren? The problem is one of vital importance, and after having been for years the object of studied researches, has at last been sufficiently cleared up, to awaken bishops, priests, and laity to the necessity of establishing catholic schools, where the minds of the young will be guarded against the poisoning influences of an infidel system of education, and imbued with the true spirit of

catholic vitality. The rueful experiment of the last quarter of a century has convinced all men who believe in christianity and morality, that it is not enough to build churches, and erect magnificent structures to the honor and glory of God, in order to preserve the faith in the hearts of our children. Such and kindred enterprises speak well for the generosity of our people, and for the practical faith of the present generation of hardy pioneers, who lavish upon the temple of the most High a liberal share of the wealth which they accumulated by dint of persevering labor, by years of privations and toils. But what is to become of our children? Of what use are beautiful churches, if, ten or twenty years hence, they are to be deserted, be void of their worshipers, liberalized by a system of education that ignores God, and places religion and irreligion on the same footing? Catholic schools are a necessity which, thanks be to God, our priests understand, and for the maintenance of which they and their people think no sacrifice too great, no privation too hard.

Men of transcendent piety and thought, who are working exclusively for the glory of God and the exaltation of His holy church, have fully realized in all ages the urgent necessity of educating the young; and we would point with legitimate pride, to what the catholic church has effected in that direction, not only in Europe, but in these United States, where one of the first

and foremost institutions of learning established was a catholic one,* were it not that the groundless accusation of know-nothing bigotry, that our church fosters ignorance, was long ago exploded and effectually set aside by even our worst enemies.

Father Nerinckx understood, in all its bearings upon the practical faith of the individual and upon the future of the church, the great question of education; and in the wilds of Kentucky, as in the rural village of populous Belgium, his first care was given to the children. On them he lavished his labors, and following the example of our Blessed Redeemer, he loved the little children with the most tender love. He would gather them around him wherever he went, and devote to their instruction most of the time that was not taken up in saying Mass, preaching, and hearing confessions; and that was no inconsiderable time, for he would stay a whole week at each of the churches and stations, mainly for the purpose of instructing them. Thoroughly acquainted with the restless nature of childhood, he would relieve the tediousness of a many hours' session, by all the successful little devices that refresh their minds, enlist their interest, or claim their undivided attention. After having explained the catechism with all the earnestness, which his serious nature brought to

*Georgetown College, designed by the venerable and patriotic Archbishop Carroll, in 1784, five years before his consecration; built in 1789, and opened 1791.

the fulfillment of a duty, so sacred as the one of molding the hearts of the little ones to the doctrines of the catholic church, and of preparing them for the reception of their first holy communion, he would call them around him, and teach them some simple little hymn, like the following, which he composed for their especial benefit:

"Come, dear Lord, possess my heart,
And fill it with thy love;
O stay with me, and ne'er depart,
But take me up above;
Where Jesus sweet and Mary dwell,
Where saints and angels are;
From snares of world and pains of hell
Oh! grant me to beware!
Oh! grant me to beware!"

They then folded their hands in supplicating prayer and beseeched the Heavenly Father in touching strains for the enlightenment of infidels, the conversion of sinners, and the perseverance of the just. Another lesson would then follow, relieved at times by an interesting little anecdote, edifying and instructive, and the exercises would be wound up with the somewhat lengthy but touching practice of "Het *Kruisgebed*," prayer with arms extended in the form of a cross. The poor urchins, writes a gentleman now in the Far West, who in his younger days attended catechism class at St. Charles, would sometimes, after a great deal of writhing, let the little arms sink, when a quick "*arms up!*" from the kneeling priest would bring them back to the desired position. But although the pious

father's devotional exercises would at times tire his young audience, they loved him none the less for that; for, aside from the fact that sacred pictures, beads, and books were the reward of their application, he had a peculiar tact in winning their hearts, and they all felt the greatest affection for the grave and austere pastor, who made himself all to all that he might win all to Christ.

After Mass, he was in the habit of practicing the same beautiful devotion: "He went to the center of the church, where, surrounded by the little children, who so dearly loved him, he knelt down, and, with his arms extended in the form of a cross—the children also raising their little arms in the same manner—he recited prayers in honor of the five blessed wounds of our divine Saviour. The parents often joined the children in this morning devotion. After this, he led his little congregation, composed chiefly of children, into the adjoining grave-yard, where he caused them to visit and pray over the graves of their deceased relatives and friends."*

Father Nerinckx taught the little ones to practice what they believed; it was, as we have seen, with their help that he beautified St. Charles' church, through them that he brought the parents to their duties; and thus he laid broad and deep the foundations of catholic piety in Kentucky; thus he trained in solid and practical devotion these now flourishing congrega-

*"Sketches of Kentucky," pg. 145.

tions, whose beautiful churches, and more strikingly beautiful religiousness in them, commend them at once to the admiration of the thoughtful visitor. Half a century has elapsed since the rugged priest rested from his labors, and the name of Father Nerinckx is still on their lips and on the lips of their children as a household word, his memory is engraved on their hearts, and his spirit still imbues their souls.

These incessant labors for the instruction of youth, however, did not satisfy the burning zeal of our missionary. Many and earnest were the consultations he held with his worthy co-laborer, Father Badin, about the best means of securing the catholic education of the children. In the course of their apostolic visitations of the catholic settlements scattered throughout the country, they had found a few pious souls, more favored than others by the grace of God, and sufficiently educated for the purpose, who had expressed their desire of living a more secluded life away from the world, and of consecrating their lives to the instruction of catholic youth. Father Nerinckx, therefore, resolved to attempt the foundation of a religious community. As early as September, 1805, he wrote to his parents: "Twenty young ladies are ready to follow me next Spring to my new residence, thirteen miles from here [from St. Stephen's to Holy Mary's on the Rolling Fork]. My intention is to give them a house near the church, if the Bishop consents to it. They will be able to support

themselves by spinning, weaving, and sewing. The *Lovers of Mary*, as I intend to call them, would not be bound by solemn vows, and some of them would be intrusted with the instruction of poor children and slaves."

He made all the necessary arrangements; but this first attempt made by Father Nerinckx to establish a convent school at Holy Mary's failed through the apathy of those who were to be benefited by its success. Nothing daunted, but convinced of his own inability successfully to cope with the difficulties in their way, he urged the Vicar-general to make another trial. Finally, Father Badin, having been longer in the country and better acquainted with the people most likely to contribute to so worthy an enterprise, took it upon himself to procure the necessary means, leaving to his associate the task of establishing the proposed society somewhat in imitation of nuns in the old country, his humble protest to the contrary notwithstanding. Father Nerinckx wrote to Bishop Carroll, March 21, 1807: "Rev. Father Badin seems to approve very much of the institution, about which I wrote to your Lordship some time ago, and for which James Dent, a catholic man without children, offers four hundred acres of land, promising, moreover, to consecrate himself and all he possesses (which is not very much) to the same purpose. The undertaking is a difficult one indeed, and should not be intrusted to my littleness; but I can not deny its utility, and in

my humble opinion, its execution and superintendence should be given to the able and worthy men whom I hoped would soon arrive from Belgium. I am told that the Dominican fathers also have the intention of establishing a convent of religious persons of the other sex, and if the whole thing is done in the right way, it can not but tend to the greater glory of God and contribute to the salvation of many souls. There are not a few who enter the matrimonial state more from ignorance of the proper means of leading a celibate life away from the disturbances of the world, than from a deliberate propensity for the matrimonial life, and in consequence they lead a most miserable existence. Nor is it likely that the Author of the evangelical counsels who was pleased to take unto Himself in celibacy, and that in the very court of Nero, the concubines of that impious monster, by the hands of Paul, should not deign to select any in this land, in which the women are about the only ones who have zeal for religion. There is, therefore, every reason to be anxious about a holy director to be put at the head of the undertaking." *

Little did the humble priest think that, in the designs of an all-wise Providence, he was the very man exclusively selected for the purpose; and while deprecating the responsibility of so holy and important an undertaking, obedience

* Baltimore MSS.

prompted him to make preparations and plans for its success. The same year, 1807, he wrote to his parents:

"In my last letter I mentioned the impossibility of establishing a religious community of women and a school, institutions which would be very useful here. That project has now been taken up by the Vicar-general who urges me ever so much to undertake it. There is in his congregation, the care of which he also lays on my shoulders, a married couple, who not long ago commenced with nothing, and who, by dint of economy and labor, have now in their possession four hundred acres of land, with some dilapidated buildings. Their only and constant desire is to offer it up for that purpose, besides offering themselves for their whole life (they are not yet forty years old), to work for the same intention under the direction of a spiritual superior. Such an action would, in certain countries, be called fanaticism, and people there make quite another use of their property, to the great detriment of society. It appears that the thing must be undertaken without delay, although I am afraid of it.

"The project will have three special objects in view, and will eventually be a threefold institution under the name of *Friends of Mary*. By order of the Very Rev. Vicar-general I commenced framing some rules of life, etc.—it would likely be good enough to practice some myself. The result will be some kind of rules and ob-

ligations like those of the *Beguines*,* giving the members of the society an opportunity to leave the world and the liberty to return to it. The second object will be, to provide from the community teachers for catholic schools; the third, to help the poor and take care of the sick, irrespective of religious belief.

"If this plan is carried out, never will any thing have been built upon weaker foundations, and evince in a greater degree the wonderful providence of God, to whom it was, however, an easy task to bring forth the whole universe out of nothing. The prayers of my friends, which I hereby solicit for this purpose, will be of great help."

Father Badin had left for Baltimore, in August, 1807, to confer with Bishop Carroll about several matters of interest to the Western missions and to consult him about the proposed religious community. He returned in the beginning of 1808, and set to work with such energy and zeal that he was soon enabled to begin the building of the convent about half a mile from St. Stephen's, on the road to Holy Cross church. Father Nerinckx writes,† February 23, 1808: "The corner stone of the convent for the religious congregation of females which I mentioned in former letters, has been laid. The brother of the generous gentleman who had already given four hundred acres to the church,

*A religious community of females in Belgium.

†Letters in the Bollandist Library, Brussels.

donates one hundred acres adjoining Father Badin's land, and upon that farm the work has actually begun. That man, who is a widower with six children, has, notwithstanding Father Badin's reiterated refusals, insisted upon his accepting the land for the purpose mentioned, protesting that he relies on Providence who never yet left him in want. He has intrusted his son to the Trappist Fathers, and intends to place his five daughters with the sisters." Father Nerinckx advised the Prelate of the fact in the following letter, dated March 10, 1808: "Rev. Father Badin has happily returned from his laborious visit to your Lordship. He has met many of our poor people in the most extreme spiritual necessity, whom he helped and consoled as much as his short stay would allow. But, alas! what consolation can he afford who 'passes through Macedonia?'* It has been given him to have compassion on the multitude, and to witness the affliction of the people erring without pastor, and desolate. Nothing more! Ah! when will the dear Master of the harvest deign to send those whom he is to send? When will they be shortened, these days of perdition, to so many souls redeemed at so great a price? Father Badin is now building on a one hundred acre lot, which the widower Dent and children gave for the purpose, a house for the quasi-religious, to whom we are going to intrust the religious instruction of the girls; and he will

*Act Apost. xvi.; 1 Cor. xvi. 5.

soon begin, at a rather good distance from here, the erection of another house for orphans. These works will, I trust, do much good to Religion, and they prove that we are in great need of workmen. God grant that they may soon come!"* On the second day after Pentecost, 1808, Father Nerinckx wrote† again to his parents: "You will doubtless hear with satisfaction that our convent school-house is under roof; it is seventy feet long, and will have a chapel about as long and wide as the house, surmounted with a turret. Some out-buildings will be added. It is situated one mile from Father Badin's house. Six or seven of our young ladies have applied to be the first religious, but it seems that there are many more who are anxiously watching how the undertaking will succeed, and who will join the community as soon as it is an accomplished fact. May God bless what has been begun for his honor and glory; His providence is our only reliance."

A few weeks later, the young ladies who looked forward to the completion of the house with an anxiety, which the long-cherished wish of their hearts and its unlooked-for accomplishment in the rude state of society of this early period of Kentucky's history, more than justified, were ready to make the necessary arrangements to enter the house; the last nail was driven, when, alas! by some unaccountable acci-

* Baltimore MSS.

† Letters in the Bollandist Library, Brussels.

dent, a fire reduced the building to ashes, and blasted their hopes of ever seeing the realization of their pious designs. Young ladies who were ready for such sacrifices as they contemplated at that time, could not but become good mothers of families, when they saw their way to the convent hopelessly blocked up, by what they had to look upon as a permission of Divine Providence. They were anxiously sought after, and soon settled advantageously in the world.

The two brick chimneys, which alone had escaped the fiery ordeal, stood for years in the open field, amidst the blackened ruins of the destroyed building, silent monuments of the early efforts of the catholic church for the instruction of youth, at a time when her slanderers left their co-religionists in undisturbed ignorance and their backwoods dwellings unnoticed. The footsteps of their bible-peddlers had not yet crossed the shadow cast by these weather-beaten remains over the sandy hills of Marion county, when an institution, destined to bring forth hundreds of generous souls devoted to the instruction of the people, rose within sight of what seemed to be the grave of our penniless missionaries' efforts. But we must not anticipate.

However, this sad accident proved too much for Father Badin, who had spent his last cent for the cherished purpose, and used all he had of influence, business tact, and native go-aheadness for the success of the undertaking. He once more took up his original idea of attending the

more distant missions, and gave up to Father Nerinckx the supervision of the congregations nearer to their home, leaving also to his associate the undertaking which had so sadly come to an end in his hands. This was to be the crowning work of Father Nerinckx' missionary career; and God, who always blesses the things that are His, with crosses and tribulations, prepared him for the task by the fire of contradictions. Not, until 1812, shall we witness the accomplishment of the enterprise, and that under circumstances so lowly and poor, that they must have been to the pious priest an encouraging sign of future usefulness. Was not the humble birth of our Saviour in the stable of Bethlehem the sign of the salvation of the world?

CHAPTER IX.

1807–1808.

THE JESUITS IN AMERICA.—CATHOLIC PROGRESS IN KENTUCKY.—A PROCESSION IN 1807.—WHEELING.—WASHINGTON.—NEW LANCASTER.—CHILLICOTHE.—QUEBEC.—BOSTON.—KNOXVILLE.—HOLY MARY'S.—ST. CLARA'S.—ST. CHARLES.

WORKING, as Father Nerinckx did, for the sole honor and glory of God, he must have keenly felt the loss to religion which the failure of his educational scheme necessarily entailed. But in the letters written during that trying period of his life, his humility causes him to ascribe those trials to his own incapacity and sinfulness, and, like a true priest of God, he takes delight in calling attention to the success of his brethren in the ministry. They were all working in the vineyard of the same master, and they had but one soul and one heart. Animated with the same spirit of self-sacrifice, all had abandoned fatherland and friends to devote their lives to the American mission, which, at that time, comprised the whole United States. The two or three native priests were missionaries in the full sense of the word, being foreign by education and or-

dination; and each State of the Union was but a parish or mission of the one Baltimore diocese, the Bishop of which was a Father to every one of his co-laborers.

The interest which Father Nerinckx evinces in the promising advent of the Jesuits in America, would be sufficient proof of his disinterested zeal and purity of intention, if proof were needed for what shines out of every line of his beautiful letters: "In the midst of our trials," he writes,* "consoling news comes to us, by letters from Maryland, purporting that, in Georgetown, the Order of Jesuits rises like an aurora, which will, before long I trust, spread its light through our wilderness, and through the woods which overshadow these our unexplored regions, darkened, more by the cloud of heresy, unbelief, error, and sin than by their foliage. Five Jesuit Fathers have arrived there from Europe, among them a professor of theology and one of philosophy. The others are: Father Malavé, who, having resigned his pastorship of Jodoigne, near Thienen, at the same time that I left Everberg-Meerbeke, accompanied me to Amsterdam with the intention of going with me to America. He there joined the Jesuits, under the impression that, as was told us there, no catholic priests were allowed to land in America (a most egregious falsehood!). From Holland he was sent to Riga, in Russia,

* Letter to his parents, Ash Wednesday, 1807.

thence to Astrachan,* the capital of Persia, and

* Father Nerinckx confounds the brothers Malavé. Father Frank Malavé, formerly pastor of Jodoigne, joined the Jesuits in Polocks, Russia. He there found his younger brother Melchior, who had left Belgium some time previous with Mr. Motte. Father Melchior Malavé was sent to Astrachan, where he became so proficient in the Armenian tongue that he preached publicly in that language a few years after his arrival. He also soon spoke Turkisch and Tartar. Shortly after the departure of his brother for the Eastern missions, Father Frank Malavé left for Amsterdam, and embarked thence to North America with two other Jesuits—Fathers Henry and Britt.

The two others alluded to by Father Nerinckx are Fathers Beschter and Wouters.

Of these Fathers, Bishop Carroll writes in his letter of February 21, 1809, further referred to in the text: " . . . The Rev. Father Beschter is in *Lancaster*, a very flourishing town in the county of the same name, Pennsylvania. He attends with incredible zeal three congregations composed of Germans, Americans, and Irish. God blesses his work; he gains all hearts. Fathers Henry, Malavé, and Wouters attend numerous congregations on the right and oriental shore of the Potomac. The first lives about ten leagues from Washington below the river; the second, ten leagues further down, and the third, at about the same distance from Father Malavé, not far from the mouth of that majestic river, which flows into the Chesapeake."

And again, September 5, 1809: "I have the happiness of having with me for the last few days your excellent friend, Father Malavé, formerly pastor of Jodoigne, in Brabant, now a Jesuit. He writes to you, and no doubt tells you, that I recalled him from his former residence, *Newtown*, near the mouth of the Potomac, where the climate did not agree with him; I send him to a more healthy place. The regrets, veneration, and affection of his parishioners prove the assiduity and success of his labors for their salvation. I can render the same testimony to the Jesuit Father Henry, formerly a vicar in the diocese of Liege, and to Father Wouters, born at Wormhout, in Flanders, and singularly to Father Beschter, also a Jesuit, formerly pastor and dean in the province of Luxembourg, Netherland, in the several congregations which they direct." MSS. in Bollandist Library, Brussels.

is now in Georgetown, in the immediate vicinity of the capital of the United States of America—a rather memorable journey! 'Behold,' he writes, 'how wonderful are God's designs.'

"The fourth one is Father Henry, well-known in Louvain, and, it is said, a man of merit and talent. The fifth one is a German; whence the professors come I do not know. The Jesuits have now eleven novices and several postulants, and they expect twenty more from Europe. Six or seven old Jesuits were already in America at the time of the re-establishment of the Society, among them Father Molyneux, who is appointed Provincial. I told you in a former letter that the Bishop of Baltimore had also been a professed Jesuit; the coadjutor of Georgetown only a novice.* This is surely a brilliant prospect for our holy Religion, which never comes in travail but to give birth, and is seldom delivered but of twins. Europe has brought the mother in travail by sorrows and persecutions, but America is already busy nursing the new-born twins, who will soon grow up to manly strength. Jesuits and Trappists will know how to force the devilish wolf to make good so many devoured sheep.

"The Dominicans of Bornheim, Belgium, four of whom are already settled in our neighborhood, will be especially useful to religion, if they succeed in obtaining a few more earnest

*See "The Catholic Church in the United States," by De Gourcey, pgg. 71–73, who says that Coadjutor Bishop Neale had just pronounced his vows when the Society was suppressed.

workers of their Order. But all this will scarcely take place before my death, and contributes little to my own individual progress in virtue, for which I alone am responsible, and I alone have to fear."

But Father Nerinckx was doing his share toward the astonishing religious awakening which marked the beginning of the nineteenth century in America. Of the results of his efforts, we have his own humble and almost unconscious testimony; it passes over in silence the toils and sacrifices which they necessarily imply. Such is the customary price of success. "In my last letter," he writes,* "I called your attention to the spiritual gains lately obtained. They consist principally in the growing number of catholics who settle in this region, and the moving away of non-catholics. New churches are rapidly multiplying, and the old ones are enlarged and embellished. There is also a marked improvement in our graveyards, in which I have every adult's grave adorned with a cross five feet high, and every child's with one of three feet, which the relations of the deceased must have in readiness before I perform the burial services. Every Sunday and holiday, after Mass, I go in procession with the choir to the grave of the last deceased, where we sing the *Miserere* or the *Dies Irae* in English, at the

* Letters of 1807. Cfr. Letters of Bollandist Library, Brussels.

close of which I make a short speech on death or prayers for the dead.

"The great pastime of our population consists in racing, the horses running for premiums, and they take great delight in it. It is often attended by deathly accidents and is the source of many sins. It is hard to keep our catholics from these amusements, but they have given up balls and dances, which are, however, much frequented by non-catholics. . . .

"Here, like every-where else, it was customary to run out of church immediately after Holy Communion. I have remedied this sad indifference toward the holiest of our mysteries, by assembling all those who approach the Holy Table, and reading aloud acts of thanksgiving, followed by the recitation of the Rosary to gain the indulgences.

"I should also mention that I have at present some twenty persons, white and black, under instruction who desire to join the church; I have received several this year. Five or six couples, who were married out of the church, have begged to be admitted to public penance. . . .

"Owing to the preparatory exercises which I introduced, first communion is received with much more devotion and fruit than heretofore. Persons who are about to enter the matrimonial state also have to prepare themselves by a retreat, before being admitted to it; and the number of those who attempt to marry persons of other denominations or of their own kindred is

considerably diminished. None are admitted to the wedding feast except parents, brothers, sisters, uncles, and aunts; no cousins or strangers, except the witnesses, can attend. And as they used to object here, as every where else, that Jesus and Mary attended the wedding of Cana, in Galilee, I have insisted upon their not excluding these Holy Persons, and, as a consequence, I direct the bride and bridegroom to say aloud with all those present at the feast, the whole Rosary immediately after sunset, and most of our catholics are faithful to my injunctions.

"But I must tell you all about our procession on the octave of Corpus Christi of this year (1807). It is the third one we had at Holy Cross church within a year and a half; I have it regularly in my own congregation. Three men on horseback opened the march, the middle one carrying a silk flag surmounted by a large cross, the two others holding huge green boughs in their hands. Another man in the dress of an acolyte followed them with the processional cross, heading the double row of people, consisting of boys, girls, and grown-up people, marching two and two, carrying green branches instead of torches, and forming a line of march three miles long; many non-catholics were present. At distances of twenty paces a leader marched in the middle of the lines, saying the holy Rosary, which all answered aloud. The canopy, which I had made myself, was held aloft by four men,

and immediately behind the Blessed Sacrament followed fourteen armed men, led by a uniformed sergeant. Three other men on horseback, also uniformed, with drawn swords, brought up the rear, and held back the surging crowd following and saying the beads. Choirs of men and women sung alternately hymns in honor of the Blessed Eucharist, until we arrived at the residence of the Trappists, where a repository altar had been erected. Rev. Badin, assisted by two Dominicans, officiated, and I acted as master of ceremonies; a squad of horsemen acting as marshals saw that every thing proceeded in an orderly manner, and every thing passed off with more decorum and piety than the most enthusiastic had dared anticipate. Our rites and ceremonies exert a powerful influence upon sectarians, many of whom are favorably impressed by them, and are led to investigate the claims of the catholic church on their allegiance, and are led into its fold. . . .

"Feast of St. Augustin, August 28, 1807.—This day I received into the church eight persons, converts from various sects whose false tenets they have repudiated. . .

"Lent is kept very strictly. Lard in the preparation of food is allowed every day, but we have to abstain from meat the first four days of Lent, the entire Holy Week, and on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays of every week. This year (1807) we were dispensed on Mondays. On the days that meat is allowed, we

can use only one kind and one course, a practice that is kept up the whole year round, although it is not ordered by the church. Lent, as well as the rest of the year, is wonderfully free from all diseases which might be caused by fish-bones, since the animals that might harm us that way are totally banished from these regions.

"Every night, and in every house, besides the customary evening prayers, which are said in common the whole year through, even in the houses of mixed catholics, they say the Litany of all the Saints, and if they can not read, the Rosary. Since New Year's, we have encouraged our people to come together every morning before daylight, and say the prayers aloud in common, a pious practice which many follow."

Little did the pious priest think, that, what he looked upon as pious practices, were soon to become the text of malevolent accusations against him.

Nor did Father Nerinckx neglect the material progress of his numerous congregations. Among the following notes relating to his missions, will be found several facts relating to missions outside of his field of labor. As we do not deem it foreign to the scope of this work to notice items of interest for the history of the catholic church all over the United States, we refrain from curtailing their contents.

"August 17, 1807.—I have prevailed upon Father Badin to undertake the difficult journey

of seven hundred and fifty miles to Baltimore, to further, as much as possible, the interests of this incipient church; I expect the most consoling results from this truly painful undertaking. I am now practically left alone on the mission. A Bishop, and some priests rich in virtue and talents, is what we now want; and I pray the good God to grant them to us.

"I just now come home from Holy Mary's, where, after being much thwarted, I have finally succeeded in making the contract for an altar which is to cost $160, part of which I defray myself. Made after my own designs, it will be inlaid with different kinds of wood, and have a niche flanked with columns, in which I intend to place my statue of the Blessed Virgin; the beautiful crucifix from the chisel of Laurent of Mechlin, will be quite an ornament to the altar.

"October 28, 1807.—Father Badin's first letters have reached me. He writes from *Wheeling*, a city on the Ohio and about half way to Baltimore, where people going to Kentucky generally take the boat to sail down the river: 'September 26, 1807.—Last Sunday I said Mass in *Washington*, an incipient town of Kentucky, four miles from the Ohio frontier. I preached in the court-house, several representatives, and fifteen catholic families whom I had apprised of my arrival through the newspapers, being present. There are about thirty catholic families, who had not had a chance to hear Mass for

years.* Almost every day and in every settlement through which I passed, I have found catholic families of every nationality—French, Italian, Irish, German, and American. By to-morrow evening I will be in the midst of catholic settlements, which, people tell me, are situated all along the road to Baltimore. Nothing but catholics all along the road! God only knows how many live in the backwoods, and not one priest! I derived great consolation from a German catholic settlement of twelve families, who have bought three hundred and twenty acres of good land for a church; they entreated me to pray to God that none should die without having received the Sacraments of Holy Church. They had not seen a priest for many years, and I promised to say Mass for them at my return. I have charged two catholic gentlemen to buy a lot or farm in my name to build a church in *New Lancaster*, a rising town thirteen miles from the above German settlement. I received several persons into the church, baptized some children, and noted down the number of catholic individuals and families. The Methodists, a new protestant sect, of which I spoke to you some

* Major Erkuries Beatty has the following in his diary about *Washington*, under date September 2, 1786: "Crossed the North Fork of Licking about fifteen miles from the Blue Licks. . . . Four miles further on, we came to a quite nice village called Washington, within five miles of Limestone. . . . These people first began to build this place entirely in the woods last Christmas; and now, I suppose, there are forty houses in it, chiefly indifferent log ones and rather scattered." Magazine of American History, April, 1877, pg. 310.

time ago as Philistines, play their pranks about Washington, Ky. Twenty ministers, with their so-called Bishop of Baltimore, assembled last week in the town, and converted ever so many sinners, viz: had them fall to the ground like possessed by the devil and dance like Corybants; the religious exercises of this people are as foolish as they are sinful. The savages, who were thought to be preparing for war against the whites, are gathered in *Chillicothe*, not far from Wheeling, having at their head a Baptist minister who acts as interpreter and who has been several years with them. They declared, in a public audience granted to them by the governor of Ohio, that their intentions were peaceful; their only object in assembling was to accustom themselves to the manner of living of the whites, viz: to live in towns, to till the ground, to become christians, etc., etc. If measures are not taken to supply them with priests, according to the treaty entered into with the United States, which promised the Indians to give them Black Robes, this, our inheritance, will fall into the hands of protestant ministers who have no right to it.'

"These are the most important items given me by Father Badin. No doubt he will have a great deal more to tell after his return; but is not this sufficient for a priest to wish he had the wings of the eagle, to fly to the help of these unfortunate people? . . . Father Badin also

earnestly requests priests for the frontiers of Spain and America.

"The Superior of the Trappists has lately received a letter from the Bishop of *Quebec*, in Canada, to whom he had written for help, that religious affairs are in a pitiful condition in that region, owing to the harshness of the English government toward catholics; it refuses to allow the foundation of any religious community. The Bishop also mentions that he has consecrated a Bishop for Asia.

"*In Boston*, where a zealous Doctor of Sorbonne* was almost stoned to death, because he tried to plant the catholic religion in the city, the same reverend gentleman is now building a second church. If rumors are true, he will be one of the new Bishops.

"The Right Rev. Bishop of Baltimore has been seriously wounded by being thrown out of his carriage; but I learn, through Father Badin, that he has already recovered.

"A Methodist preacher is receiving instructions preparatory to his reception in the church. Fevers are prevailing, and not a few die of them; they buried yesterday the tenth one who died without sacraments, owing to the want of priests. Several of these were advanced in age, and had not yet made their first communion. My own sickness may have been the cause of some dying without the priest. . . .

* Louis de Cheverus was consecrated first Bishop of Boston, November 1, 1808.

"October 25, 1807.—Rev. Charles Guny, who came with me to America, and the Canadian priest spoken of, made their profession at the Trappist convent this week. . . .

"December, 1807.—I had suffered so long from the fever that I finally bethought myself of the chapel in Brabant, where people used to go to get rid of it. I resolved to take my recourse to the same means, having in vain used all known remedies. After a novena, I celebrated Mass in honor of St. Petronilla, and before I was through saying it, I was perfectly cured. . . .

"February 23, 1808.—Father Badin, who has returned from Baltimore, has received a letter from Knoxville, Tennessee, two hundred miles from here, requesting him to go and visit the catholic families living there, who never yet saw a priest. I should not wonder if I had to go there myself, it being Father Badin's intention to go to Post Vincennes. Ah! if we had priests! . . .

"March 10, 1808.—The two trunks and the pictures which you [his Belgian friends] sent us, arrived in Baltimore last December. The *Ecce Homo* painting forms the altar-piece of St. Charles, the *Crowning of the Blessed Virgin* that of Holy Mary's, and the *Assumption of the Blessed Virgin* that of St. Joseph's church. The *Visitation* is reserved for the Convent church; the statue of the Blessed Virgin for St. Stephen's, and the *Flagellation* for St. Barbara's church. The chasubles have been equally distributed

among us; the bell I intended to give to our future Bishop, together with the beautiful missal of the President of Oudenrode, the new gilt ciborium and monstrance. My catechism bell of Meerbeke calls us here to morning and evening prayers and to Mass; it is the first one ever heard in these regions. A silver pixis, relics, a clock, books, statues, beads, etc., have been sent to me from friends in Antwerp, Ninove, Aelst, Dendermonde, Mechlin, etc.

"Pentecost Week, 1808.—Two weeks ago, I sang the first High Mass at the new altar of Holy Mary's. The altar is forty feet high. A new pulpit and communion railing make the church look as new inside, and the outside is graced with a steeple, upon which I myself planted the Cross. St. Charles is as well provided, but has no steeple. I hope to finish soon St. Clara's church, twenty-four miles from here, the foundations of which I have already laid, and St. Bernard's, sixty miles from the one just mentioned. The Dominicans are building a beautiful brick chapel on their premises.

"Father Badin just arrives from Post Vincennes. He there buried, in the presence of the United States governor, whose guest he was during his stay at the Post, and of many Indians, one of the neighboring Indian kings or chiefs, who was still young and had been baptized a short time previous to his death. Father Badin preached to the assembled Indians through an interpreter, and the troops rendered military

honors to the brave's remains. He has great hopes for the conversion of these people.

"Octave of Corpus Christi, 1808.—I celebrated the feast in St. Charles. Last Sunday I officiated at Holy Mary's, where we held the first procession of the Blessed Sacrament; and next Thursday we will have the most solemn procession ever seen in this State, or perhaps in North America, outside of Canada.

"June 27, 1808.—Came home this evening from St. Clara's congregation. The church is finished up to the roof. I intend to build a steeple (I usually make them twenty-three feet above the ridge of the roof, with cross and weather-vane), in hopes of obtaining a bell.

"St. Clara's church is built on a hill. Many non-catholics have subscribed for it. God reward them with the gift of faith.

"Father Urban, Superior of the Trappists, is expected to be here soon on his return from the Illinois region, where he went to look up advantageous settlements for new missionaries."*

* MSS. letters of the Bollandist Library, College of St. Michel, Brussels.

CHAPTER X.

1806–1808.

FATHER NERINCKX' PIETY.—HIS DAILY LIFE.—HIS ZEAL FOR THE SPIRITUAL PROGRESS OF HIS PEOPLE.—THE DOMINICANS.—THEIR ADVENT THE OCCASION OF PETTY PERSECUTIONS AGAINST FATHER NERINCKX.—FATHER NERINCKX ASKS TO RETIRE TO SOME OTHER FIELD OF LABOR.—YIELDS TO BISHOP CARROLL'S ADVICE, AND REMAINS IN KENTUCKY.

FATHER NERINCKX was a man of extraordinary piety and mortification, and aimed at the perfection of the catholic priesthood. The fact that all his writings were destroyed, after his death, prevents us from giving accurate details of virtues and daily practices, which every pious soul must divine, and which made his faith and love of God shine forth with such brilliancy as to stir up to piety even the imperfect christians of these early days. Says Bishop Flaget, for fourteen years a witness of his works, writing to Bishop England, of Charleston: *

"During the last forty years of his life, Mr. Nerinckx had labored for the glory of God and the good of his neighbor, with a constancy, an activity, and a zeal seldom equaled, never per-

* U. S. Catholic Miscellany, December 8, 1824.

haps surpassed. His whole life had been one continued voluntary martyrdom and holocaust. He contemned this world, and panted only for heaven; but he ardently wished to go to paradise with a numerous escort of souls, whom he had been instrumental in rescuing from perdition and leading to salvation. This thought seemed to engross his whole mind and soul, and his life was but a carrying out of it."

A catholic priest can ambition no higher praise from the mouth of his Bishop; and that it was a well-deserved encomium is abundantly proved by a short account of his daily life which Father Nerinckx sent to his parents in 1805: "We have some twenty-four missions to attend to. The most remote church is sixty miles from here,* but we are sometimes called as far as one hundred and eighty miles in either direction. This does not happen often; but, thank God, when it does happen, I do not suffer from riding on horseback as I used to. Three hours in the saddle fatigued me very much; now, I have traveled one hundred and fifty miles on horseback in two nights and one day, through bad roads and all kinds of weather, and I stood it better than I expected.

"My usual occupations during the week are as follows: On Sunday morning I am in the saddle about four o'clock A. M. so as to reach one of

* MSS. letter, written from Holy Mary's at the Rolling Fork, 1805–6. *Sup. Cit.*

my mission churches about half-past six. I there find a crowd of people awaiting my coming to go to confession. We first say the morning prayers, followed by meditation; I then give them an instruction on the sacrament of penance and prepare them for it. At intervals of half an hour, marked by my ringing a bell from the sacristy where I am hearing confessions, one of the congregation, whom I designate myself, says the beads at a determined intention, until about eleven o'clock, when I vest for Mass. Before beginning the Holy Sacrifice I deliver a short address, and I preach after the reading of the Gospel. After Mass, during which the people usually sing some English hymns, I have the children pray for special intentions as I did in Meerbeke. The congregation is dismissed between one and two P. M., when I baptize infants and bury the dead. Seldom do I eat any thing before four o'clock except some water and milk; and it happens that some one is ready to take me out on a sick call of twenty or more miles by the time I have had a bite.

"This is my order of the day for Sundays and four of the six week days. I hear confessions every afternoon until seven, in Summer until eight or nine o'clock P. M.; so that I have to figure closely to find time to say my office. To-day, November 8, 1805, I was still giving Holy Communion at five P. M., and that happens almost daily. I spend the other two days at St. Stephen's with Father Badin; and as soon as

the people know that the priests are at home, we need not think of rest.

"I also undertook five weeks ago a very hard work, viz., to prepare the young ladies above fourteen years of age for their first communion; they number ninety in my three congregations. The exercises last seven weeks, and a few days of each week are set apart for spiritual exercises. To attend a dance, or to be unbecomingly dressed, is punished by refusal of admission to first communion, and I succeed wonderfully well in abolishing these abuses. Those of the first class in *St. Charles*, who were sufficiently instructed, made their first communion on the name's day of their holy Patron Saint. I now call up a new class of those who are from twelve to fourteen years old. It is the hardest work I ever undertook."

Father Nerinckx thoroughly understood that that day was going to influence their whole lives; hence he bent all his energy to their worthy preparation. He had, moreover, that which is the life of the priest—a lively faith in our Divine Lord Jesus Christ present in the Blessed Eucharist, and a reverence which made him look upon the best endeavors of man as a feeble effort to be less unworthy. "Nothing," says Bishop Flaget,* "could exceed the devotion of Mr. Nerinckx to the Holy Sacrament of our altars; in this respect he was a model for every clergyman. In his churches, you saw only plainness except about the altar; but his devotion led him to aim

* United States Catholic Miscellany, *ut supra.*

at magnificence in this place, especially as regarded the tabernacle, which was to contain the Holy of Holies. Every thing connected with the Holy Mysteries called forth the exercise of this devotion. Never did he permit a day to pass without celebrating Mass, unless grievously ill, or engaged in a long journey; and a rule of his monasteries is to keep up, even during the night, the perpetual adoration, by a succession of two sisters to two sisters, before the Holy Sacrament, to pay their homage to the God who loved us so dearly, as, after having suffered death for us, to give us, under the sacramental veils, His flesh to eat; and to repair in some degree, the disrespect with which this Sacrament is treated by the ingratitude of the human race.

"This good man had also great filial piety to Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and he desired to excite this affection for the mother of our Saviour in all those with whom he had any intercourse. He admired her spirit of patient love and resignation in sufferings, especially when she beheld her dearly beloved—her Creator and her Son—upon that cross, at the foot of which she was weeping. Often did the pious ejaculation which he was in the habit of teaching to others, escape from his own lips: 'Oh! Suffering Jesus! Oh! Sorrowful Mary!' In all the churches which he attended he established the Society of the Holy Rosary, and the Confraternity and Sisterhood of the Scapular; and almost all the

catholics of his congregations are still enrolled in one or more of those pious societies.

"Nothing could be more edifying than his piety toward the dead. It is quite impossible to pass by any of the numerous cemeteries which he has laid out, without feeling deep sentiments of religion, and having a sweet sensation of deep melancholy, blended with the hope of the christian. In the midst of each abode of the dead is reared the glorious emblem of the christian's faith, a large cross, surrounded by a balustrade for the convenience of the pious friends who come to pray for their departed brethren. At the head of each grave, you will find the emblematic cross, inscribed with the dates of the birth, death, and the name of the brother or sister whose bones are there laid up in the hope of resurrection. . . . He never permitted a week to pass without offering up a Mass for the repose of the departed.

"His love of retirement was such that he never paid a visit of mere ceremony. Indeed, he never visited, except when the good of his neighbor or the duty of his ministry made it obligatory on him to do so. His watching, even during his longest and most painful journeys, were very long, and were always spent either in study or in prayer. Prayer appeared to be his greatest and only solace, in the midst of his continual labors."

Left to himself, in what is little less than a wilderness, deprived of the exterior pomp and

majesty of the catholic ritual, which is, we may say, a necessary help to spirit and truth, and without which the most lively faith is apt to grow cold, the missionary pioneer has but too often to forego all these pious practices of more privileged catholic regions, where religious societies and sodalities keep alive and set aglow the spiritual life of their inhabitants. Busy forming congregations and building churches; roaming through the woods from settlement to settlement, continually on the go from house to house, celebrating the Holy Mysteries; fasting almost every day in the year, in order to give to the hurriedly collected people a chance to go to confession and holy communion; and hurrying away again to some distant station where others equally desirous of fulfilling their duties are anxiously awaiting his coming—it is an almost impossible task for the priest to attend to the less essential practices of religion, implied in the establishment of devotional societies, seemingly doomed to vegetate and die out in his absence. But Father Nerinckx was too essentially a "Spiritual man," not to try to have his people gather that spiritual manna of devotion in the desert. The additional faculties which he obtained from Bishop Carroll * for the benefit of his flock, prove beyond a doubt his solicitude in this respect.

Intent upon the advancement of the souls committed to his care in the science of the

* See *Sup.*, pg. 54.

Saints, he insisted upon their complying with the rules and regulations he laid down for their daily conduct. The greater number thankfully received his ministrations, and endeavored to live up to the model of perfection he constantly held before their eyes. But the devil, who is always ready to thwart the exertions of the good, stirred up a few evil ones, who took a pretext from Father Nerinckx' severity to persecute him: "It is also my lot," he writes to Bishop Carroll, June 2, 1806, "to be persecuted by some, and to be annoyed by a rather intense hatred, giving itself vent in threats against my life; whilst others, not inferior in numbers, prove themselves to be religious, docile, willing, and fervent in all practices of piety, and are not badly affected toward me. I can hardly see in what I am displeasing to my persecutors; surely not in temporal matters, since I have received nothing, and have given the half of my annuity toward the restoration of the church. However, this will not benefit the church any, for the religion of this people does not go so far as to practice sacred liberality. They hardly ever understood, or truly believed, that there is a God, or that man has a soul. I think, however, that the bawls of these lunatics are especially owing to the fact that he who keeps them prisoners in the infernal darkness, admonished by the word of God, and fearing to be expelled from them, torments these miserable beings above measure. But we know that these con-

tradictions are the daily food and delicacies of the apostolic laborers after their works and fatigues." *

Father Nerinckx tried to stem the evil by public reproof; but the rebels only grew bolder, confident that the Dominican Fathers would uphold them, or at least be more lenient with them than their pastors.

These religious had arrived in the United States in 1805, and after a short stay in Baltimore had removed to Kentucky in the Spring of 1806. Father Fenwick, accompanied by Father Wilson, purchased a farm in Washington county, and established the Convent of St. Rose of Lima, thus becoming the founder of the Order of St. Dominic in America, the superiorship of which he soon resigned into the hands of Father Wilson.

"The Dominicans," writes Father Nerinckx, in 1807,† "have permanently settled in St. Ann's congregation, which I attended up to this time, some ten miles from our home. They pay $5,000 for a farm of five hundred acres, on which there is a stone dwelling of two stories with out-houses, and a saw and grist mill, with sufficient water power to run them both six months in the year. They reside two miles from *Springfield*, our county town, which has fifty or sixty houses, and where a lot has been set apart for a catholic church which is not yet be-

* Baltimore MSS.

† MSS. letter in the Bollandist Library, Brussels.

gun. They have called their residence *St. Rose*, after St. Rose of Lima, the first and only known American Saint who belonged to their Order. The Fathers have already ten or twelve students, out of whom they may perhaps gain a few to increase their community. This appears to be their only object; they do not intend to serve on the mission. In the meantime they have accepted care of souls in St. Ann's congregation and environs, amounting to about two thousand souls; but they refuse to attend distant missions, and our work is scarcely diminished. . . ." Fathers Badin and Nerinckx had hailed their advent with genuine delight, and gave unsparing and oft-repeated praise to these new co-laborers. But they had been trained in different schools; holding the same principles, they often differed in their practical application, a fact which made their opinions clash in the eyes of the people, and gave the discontented a specious reason to rebel.

There is no denying the fact, that in the last century the French clergy were considerably tainted by the Jansenistic teachings, which up to this day bear their bitter fruits, in the neglect of the sacraments evinced by the French people, and the severity of the Gallican priests in the administration of the Sacrament of Penance. Father Badin had received his education and most of his theological training in France; and Father Nerinckx, himself no laxist, testifies in

his letters that the Vicar-general was "of more than necessary severity, which, if tempered with a little of the honey of kindness, would be more palatable to the people, and of more use in curing inveterate sinners and loathsome wounds." The same spirit had pervaded the theological teachings of most of the Belgian Seminaries; and not only had Father Nerinckx found it in his books, and been imbued with it by his eminent professors, but he had practiced its rigorous teachings for well nigh twenty years in the ministry of his native land, where he had found obedient intellects and pliable hearts. No wonder then, if, with his naturally severe character and indomitable energy, he strove at forming his people in the more austere practices of religion. The few writings we have of him prove that he was austere unto rigor, that the ruling motive of his piety was rather fear and its objects than love;* and knowing that fear usually affects

*This does not go to prove that his piety was false, by any means; for, piety, founded on chaste fear, is solid and true piety, but is less noble and perfect than piety founded on love. As a reverend friend observed: That Father Nerinckx was a man of extraordinary piety and great love of God, I do not think admits of any doubt whatever. I really believe him to have been a man of heroic virtue, in the strict technical sense of the terms. Nor is this adverse, in my meaning, to the fact that, following the authors then studied in the seminaries, he was an extreme man in some things, and was moved rather by fear than by love. St. Liguori's piety seems to me to have been informed mainly by fear. The more amiable St. Francis de Sales had piety that always breathed the sweetness of love; both were saints, and great saints. St. Ignatius' piety is full of intellect; of intellect leading the will "ad majorem Dei gloriam."

people in a more salutary manner than the consideration of the goodness of God and of His infinite perfections, he naturally strived to encourage his people, apathetic by nature, to the practice of virtue, by the fear of the punishments reserved to those who neglect the service of God.

The Dominicans, on the other hand, had learned great forbearance in the school of adversity, and may have been too lenient in their eagerness to induce even the most neglectful to comply with their religious duties. Driven out of England by a bitter and long continued opposition to religious orders, they were first compelled to seek relief in Belgium; and they had scarcely established their college at Bornhem on a good footing, when the French revolution threatened to involve them in the general onslaught on religious houses which had proved so disastrous to their brethren in France. Not knowing what to do, Father Wilson, then President of the College, cultivated the friendship of some of the Republican officials, and even consented to take their sons as students of the institution, in the hope of saving it. By dint of concessions, he held out against the tide of oppression,* until 1805, when his conscience told him that he could stretch condescension no fur-

his was pre-eminently "obsequium rationabile." Hence, we may say: "Deus mirabilis in sanctis suis."

*Letter of Father Nerinckx to Bishop Carroll, 1808. Baltimore, MSS.

ther; and he had to wander again, until, under the leadership of Father Fenwick, he and his brethren emigrated to America. Here they found the people little instructed, and grown callous, because of long continued neglect; and they naturally felt inclined to be lenient, to the delight of those who looked upon Fathers Badin's and Nerinckx' teachings as too severe.

Drawn by the novel ceremonial of the Dominican Order, and its picturesque dress, which, as experience teaches, are powerful attractions in the eyes of people unused to such interesting displays, the catholics flocked to them from far and wide. Moreover, Father Fenwick, by birth a Marylander, as were most of the catholic settlers of Kentucky, naturally thought that he understood better than the missionary priests the wants of his countrymen, who liked the Dominicans all the better from the fact that both spoke fluently the English language, their mother tongue. The Dominicans were thus the innocent cause of what threatened to become a serious contention, intensified, it may have been, by the fact that they sought more the success of their Order and the evangelizing of the people by missionary exercises, than parochial work.

On the 6th of February, 1806, Father Nerinckx wrote to Bishop Carroll,* from "Holy Mary's at the Rolling Fork:"

* Baltimore MSS.

"Two Dominican Fathers* have already arrived in this region, and have begun to work in the interest of the missions, helping the poor people, pressed, nay, giving out for the want of spiritual food. But it appears that their aid will be of little duration, since it is known, owing to their repeated assertions, that they came out, not to exercise the ministry in favor of the missions, but to extend their Order. They say, however, that they will do what they can in the neighborhood of their monasteries; a sure sign that the property of the missions and of the newly established churches will have to be given to them, and that there will be very little hope of having the spiritual field properly cared for. This is an incongruity; all the greater from the fact that the field is overrun with weeds and thistles, which, owing to the lack of laborers to cut them in time, choke the good seed."

As time went on, the missionaries experienced more and more difficulty in dealing with the dissatisfied portion of their flock. Many negligent christians took a malign pleasure in going to the Dominicans and contributing more for their buildings than even the richest were asked to do for the support of their parish priests. Father Badin went to consult the Bishop of Baltimore about the matter, and Rev. Nerinckx wrote at the same time the following letter,

* Father Tuite is mentioned as one of the two in a subsequent letter of June 2, 1806. He probably took Father Fenwick's place, who was to bring the fourth one from Baltimore.

dated June 2, 1806:* ". . . Father Badin can hardly refuse to acknowledge, by this time, that he experienced the truth of my prognostic assertions with regard to the Dominicans. We and they differ very much in speculative theology, but in many things entirely so in practice. I dare not judge for myself how much it is expedient to say, but I can positively assert one thing, viz: May be 'they will multiply the nation, but they will neither increase the joy nor renew the face of the earth.' (Isaiah ix. 3.) The insolent grow more so; and those who, being without love of God, were a little coerced by fear, now that the reins are loosened, rush headlong to the city of refuge, which they boast of having found. They expect, moreover, many extraordinary privileges from the two other Dominicans whose arrival is anxiously looked for; they confidently imagine and publicly assert that these will bring plenary indulgences, not only for absolution of the pains due to sin after the sin is forgiven, but for preventing them from incurring the guilt of sin at all. The people call these reverend gentlemen *easy;* Rev. Badin pronounces them extreme *laxists*, and I (who, although severe, look upon my colleague as altogether too rigid and stern,) think that he is not mistaken in his estimate of them. However, many begin to grow tired of these honeyed means of salvation, and, appreciating the difference between peace and peace in matters of

* Baltimore MSS.

eternal consequence for their souls, apply to us for the former remedies, howsoever bitter they may be said to be. Matrimonial matters are decided according to the desires of the parties without regard for the sanctity of the matrimonial state; every thing is allowed, and by and by every thing will be expedient. . . . If these and similar teachings and practices can be adhered to against the express law of God, the repeated counsels of the Apostles, and the opinion of all sound theologians, I do not see what can be opposed to the private interpretation of the Bible by heretics. . . .

"I hardly believe that the Dominicans will succeed in building a monastery here, considering that they are not willing to put up with humble beginnings, and that they will get but little pecuniary assistance from the people. But if the Order does succeed, I think it necessary, and it is my most ardent wish, that a man be called here from some other Dominican monastery, who will instill into them a true religious spirit. That man should be a true lover of regular observance and inflamed with zeal for the salvation of souls.* For, what is to be

* Father Nerinckx was surely actuated by the best of motives in writing as he does. He did not find fault with the illustrious Order of St. Dominic, but with the actions of a very few of its members. That he formed a correct idea of the state of affairs at St. Rose's may be gathered from the following extract of Archbishop Spalding's *Life of Bishop Flaget*, Louisville, 1852, pg. 288: "In August, 1828, the Rev. F. Raphael Mūnos arrived at the convent, as prior. He had been commissioned by the General of the Order to re-establish therein, in its full vigor, the holy rule

hoped for the glory of our holy religion from an institution whose members abhor the weight and heat of the day, and are removed so far away from the vigilant eye of their superiors, who would prove their censors and make them adhere to the monastic discipline? Let me not be understood to say that they are bad; far from me to insinuate any thing of the kind; yet I do say, that, in my humble opinion, they have too little zeal for the religious observances of their Order. . . .

"I feel all the more free, my Lord, in writing to you as I have done, from the fact that I foresee that the Dominicans will be professors of our Ecclesiastical Seminary in Kentucky, or at least will constitute a majority of our clergy, if Providence does not interfere; and I might be sorry afterward, but too late, not to have spoken my mind on the subject, since you expect me to look after the interests of Religion in this region. . . ."

Soon after the arrival of the Dominicans at St. Rose's, Father Nerinckx had given up to them Springfield, where he had every thing prepared for the erection of a church; also St. Ann's, on Cartwright's Creek. It was especially in these places, where his influence was no longer felt, that his enemies exerted themselves in the most

of St. Dominic; which, amidst the trying circumstances and distracting cares of the missionary life the earlier Fathers were compelled to lead, had suffered some relaxation. The Order is now in a highly prosperous condition."

shameless manner to destroy whatever good he had effected, and to cause his name to be odious to the people; the Dominicans holding themselves aloof, or being perhaps unable to counteract the evil influences of these rebels. The picture the holy man draws of the state of affairs on Cartwright's Creek, two years after he had left it, made his heart bleed: "This congregation," he writes to Bishop Carroll,* June 30, 1808, "was the best of all my missions. They abhorred public conventicles, especially nocturnal ones, dances, marriages with heretics and relations, worldly fashions and ornaments. The children and youths applied themselves earnestly, to acquire the knowledge of the christian doctrine and to the practice of virtue, stimulated as they were by public examinations and rewards. Married people abstained scrupulously, and for virtue's sake, from all license injurious to their state; and on Sundays, by far the greater number attended piously and religiously, from early morning till the end of the services, at the church ceremonies. But now, from what I hear, all that has passed away like a shadow; marriages with heretics are but too easily contracted; dances are allowed in daytime and are no sin; and so on (for I like to be brief, having written to your Lordship about these things before this). . . . Yet, tumult and trouble always arise at weddings and dances in Scott county, St. Ann's, and Simpson's Creek, from that more comical than evangelical prac-

* Baltimore MSS.

tice of electrifying the feet of the guests by the sounds of the fiddle. . . . If I even conceded, and I never dreamed of conceding it, that there is no evil in all that, still I could never see why the Dominicans did not uphold what was generally complied with without murmur. Surely the church can not be complimented on the introduction of all these new disorders."

Nor did the discontented stop at that. Put up to it by "B—— E——, a man who has done a great deal of harm in these parts, and who is held in supreme contempt by all good people, and by the more honest protestants," * they sent to Bishop Carroll a long list of accusations against their former pastor.

Aware of their underhand workings, Father Nerinckx sent, in the beginning of 1807, a letter to Bishop Carroll, the substance of which he gives in a subsequent communication,† as follows: "In it I mention how I distributed the sacred vestments, bought for the greater part with my own money and that of my relations. I also write some two or three pages about myself, not that I act the apologist—for, thank God, I never yet wanted to sound my own praises, nor ever will, unless the glory of God and the good of my neighbor demand it. But I explain the practice I have followed in the ministry, for the last

* Letter to Bishop Carroll, 1808. Baltimore MSS.

† The letter of 1807 is not to be found in the archiepiscopal archives. The substance of it, as here given, is taken from the one of 1808. Baltimore MSS.

twenty years, under the eyes of so many venerable men, may be martyrs, but without doubt intrepid confessors of the orthodox faith, and with the consent of his Eminence, John Henry, Cardinal de Frankenberg, whose letters of approval of my conduct and teachings I religiously keep. Not that I want to peddle around my own praises, for nothing but confusion is due and left me in time and for eternity; but that I may always have a fixed rule of action which I may safely follow. Finally, having maturely reflected on the actual state of religion in Kentucky, and compared my present position with the one I foresee, from the actual unpleasant state of affairs, will undoubtedly be mine in the future, I closed my letter by handing in my resignation, with many thanks to your Lordship for the repeated favors conferred on your humble servant. I only added the request to be allowed, for the time I remain here, to say Mass in my private dwelling."

The reason for that important step was, that in his opinion the Dominicans were altogether too lenient with the people, and that their diversity of opinions, and especially of practice, could not but be a source of scandal to the faithful and of mutual annoyance to themselves. Father Nerinckx, therefore, concluded to leave the field to the Fathers, and so take away all cause of contention.

He soon after ascertained the nature of the accusations against him, and that they were

signed by only a few, and noticed them in a letter to his Ordinary of Baltimore, dated June 30, 1808,* in the following strain:

"The principal heads of accusation against me, in as far as I can ascertain them from sayings, writings, and the testimony of my own conscience, are as follows: 1. I advise early rising at four A. M. Rev. Father Fenwick is my accuser on this head, and that is the hour that he himself as a religious ought to keep; but he errs when he says that I refuse absolution to those that sleep longer. . . . 2. I promiscuously forbid dances as bad. 3. I prohibit promiscuous visits between persons of different sex. 4. I forbid and am against marriages with heretics, etc. 5. Before marriage, I require preparation for it, proclamation of the bans and the reception of the Sacraments. 6. I prescribe rules to be kept by those that are married. 7. On Sundays and Holy days I order public prayers, kept up the whole morning, with intervals of rest, however. 8. I make continual exactions for the church treasury—fortunately they do not say that I make them for myself. 9. I forbid excess in clothing and unseemly ornamentation. I would add that I have female censors of mature age to see to it that this rule be observed in church. 10. I am too bitter in giving corrections. B—— E—— calls me a tyrant. 11. Finally, they say I impose too much restraint on the people.

* Baltimore MSS.

"If all that be true, I wonder why, wherever I go, so many crowd every day around my confessional, and besiege my ears from morning till night? . . . I do not know whether there are any other accusations against me. When I read of similar practices in the life of St. Charles and other Saints, I fancy these things are mentioned to commend them; and I do not know what judgment shall be passed upon a confessor who would attempt to induce or oblige his penitents to do the very reverse of these practices, viz: that no preparation is required before marriage; that no rules are to be followed in married life, etc.

"Moreover, if my crimes be true, why am I not cited canonically, etc. Why am I condemned among the people before I am convicted in court.

"*Tali dedicatore damnationis nostræ gloriamur.* (Tertul. ad Neronem.) I forgive, from my heart, the man who is the instigator of all this, for all the injuries which he publicly loaded me with, without any provocation on my part (his letters are publicly given to read*); for I admit in him stupid and invincible ignorance. I only desire him to remember, in the bitterness of his soul, if it is not yet callous, what troubles he has caused in the house of God, the results of which he is accountable for, and to think seriously of reparation. With mind unbiased, I judge that

* He was in Baltimore at the time, and had had an interview with the Bishop.

man to be unworthy of receiving the Sacraments, as long as it is not universally known that he has repaired the scandal given. That impostor loudly boasts that he has ample permission and indorsement from your Lordship for all he says. I do not doubt but these assertions are without foundation in fact, and he misrepresents you; but, to be sincere, I am afraid that the letters which these few hypocrites and rebel families carry around as yours (I have not seen any), add a great weight to their calumnies. If these letters are genuine and contain what these men claim they do, I shall greatly deplore it, because I do not see how matters can be mended, unless the last chapter of the Book of Esther would suggest a way of doing it. . . .

"Many of our people deplore this calamity, and come in crowds, offering to sign a protest against my calumniators. This they have already done without my knowledge, and I intend, next Sunday, to forbid them strictly to take up my defense, because I am conscious I have wronged no one. I therefore commend every thing to God, who will do what is pleasing in His sight. In the meantime I rejoice that I came not here animated by earthly hopes; I rejoice that I have not only received no temporal advantages here, but have spent every thing that Divine Providence gave me, for the greater glory of God. (Such, at least, is my hope.) . . .

"This is what I desired to add to my previous

letter, Right Rev. Sir. Commending myself again and again to your benevolent prayers, and with the wish of receiving, as soon as possible, my demissorial letters in the form of testimonials, I remain,

"Right Rev. Sir,

"Your Lordship's most humble
and obedient servant,
"CHARLES NERINCKX."

Bishop Carroll answered to this letter on the 9th of August, with his usual prudence and wisdom, advising the zealous priest to bear patiently the troubles of his position, and to remember that diversity of opinions can be consistently held without harm to religion or loss of souls. He concluded by stating that he saw no reason why he should leave his missionary station.

Father Nerinckx was too humble a man not to defer to the advice of his Bishop, and did so fully and without reserve. After having given his reasons for being afraid that the diversity of action between himself and the Dominicans would produce harm to Religion, he continues:* "Your Lordship judges that I should not leave the ministry of Kentucky. God himself forbids, in the book of Tobias, 'to do any thing without counsel;' and, in another place, it is said that 'the will of God is announced to us by the Bishops of His church.' It is now three years since I

* Letter to Bishop Carroll, September 24, 1808. Baltimore MSS.

promised almost blind obedience to your Lordship; howsoever great, therefore, be the danger of my being lost, it seems to be God's will that I should wait a while before totally abandoning the ministry. I will, therefore, until the Lord disposes otherwise, continue to guide souls, a blind man leading the blind, in fear and trembling, trusting that your Lordship will pray that both fall not into the pit."

CHAPTER XI.

1808–1809.

FATHER NERINCKX APPOINTED ADMINISTRATOR AND BISHOP OF NEW ORLEANS.—HE DECLINES THE APPOINTMENT.—HE OFFERS HIMSELF FOR THE LOUISIANA MISSION.—NEW TROUBLE IN KENTUCKY.—THE NEW ORLEANS DIFFICULTIES.—THE VICAR-GENERAL OPPOSES FATHER NERINCKX' DEPARTURE.

IT has been truthfully said that "the style is the man;" and this is especially true of a man who labors under difficulties and anguish of mind. Father Nerinckx' letters had given Bishop Carroll a thorough insight into the character of the man, and they heightened the esteem he had previously conceived for that martyr to duty.

Burdened with the administration of the American Church, that prelate had, after the purchase of Louisiana by the United States, also been canonically appointed administrator of the diocese of New Orleans; and when he petitioned the Holy See for the erection of the four new bishoprics of New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Bardstown, he also resolved to confide the government of that distant church to another.

Upon the resignation of Bishop Penalver y Cardenas, the administration of the diocese of New Orleans had devolved upon the only surviving canon, the Rev. Thomas Hassett, who assumed jurisdiction under the most trying circumstances. Anthony —— was foremost in throwing difficulties in his way, and things came to such a pass, that, at the death of the administrator in 1804, a schism was imminent. On assuming jurisdiction in 1805, Bishop Carroll appointed Rev. Olivier, the then chaplain of the Ursuline convent in New Orleans, his Vicar-general with extraordinary powers; but this did not mend matters, and it was only in 1808 that the worthy priest partially succeeded in bringing order out of this chaos of confusion.

Alarmed at the deplorable condition of the Louisiana diocese, Bishop Carroll thought that a man of Father Nerinckx' cast would be the one most likely to subdue the spirit of revolt, rife in New Orleans. He recommended him to Rome as a suitable person to take charge of the vacant diocese in the character of Administrator, signifying, at the same time, his desire of having him consecrated Titular Bishop, as soon as difficulties would be settled. The sovereign Pontiff acceded to the request of the Bishop, leaving it to his prudence and good judgment to determine the proper time for consecrating the reverend gentleman Bishop of that important See. The bulls of the four new Bishops arrived early in September, 1808, and

with them a brief appointing Father Nerinckx administrator of Louisiana; Right Rev. John Carroll to be Archbishop of the new American province.

The Archbishop hastened to communicate this news to Father Nerinckx, who, unconscious of the high honor that awaited him, had resumed his arduous missionary duties with his accustomed zeal. The letters reached him on the 30th of October of the same year, and to say that he was thunderstruck is almost putting it mildly. "The good missionary was with Mr. Badin when he learned the news of his appointment. He meekly bowed his head, and observed to his friend, beginning with the words of the Psalmist: *Bonitatem et disciplinam et scientiam docendus docere non valeo*—'having myself to be taught goodness and discipline and knowledge, I am unable to teach these things to others.' He mildly but firmly refused the proffered honor,"* in the following letter, dated:

"*October* 31, 1808.

"*Right Rev. and respected Sir:*

"Your letters of September 30th were handed to me rather late last night. Truly, I have rejoiced with exceeding great joy, hearing that the Father of mercies had finally designated the one whom we expected so impatiently, looked down upon his people, and blessed his inheritance, that He might rule it and exalt it for all

* "Sketches of Kentucky," pg. 200.

eternity! Blessed be His Holy Name here and world without end! I exultantly congratulate your Grace that it has pleased God to place you at the head of all the churches of the United States of America; so that, where you rose as the aurora of an incipient church, you may shine like the noonday sun, emitting rays which will glorify and vivify the other churches of our Union. May the good and ever-merciful God add many years unto the vigorous old age of your Lordship, for His greater glory and the good of His church, even at the expense of mine, if I have more years to live.

"It can not but be a cause of great and sincere joy to my reverend and cherished host, that he has not been called to the very hard and tremendous position of the Episcopacy; we however thought that he would have creditably carried the burden; but God's judgments are not the judgments of men. This church has reason indeed to be exceedingly glad to hold its worthy Pastor [the Right Rev. B. J. Flaget], a Prelate, the best qualified for the responsible duties of that great office. I understand that the three others are also evidently sent by God; men, according to the heart of the Prince of Pastors; infinite thanks to the Lord!

"So far, the letters of your Lordship forced tears of joy from every pious eye. But in the midst of my exultation and jubilant happiness, behold, in the twinkling of an eye, sadness has taken its place, and my bitterness has truly be-

come very intense. When reading in the next line, among the elect, my name, which should rather be condemned to eternal oblivion, I could not but emit deep groans and bitter sighs of grief, convinced, as I am that, in the judgment of an angry and justly irritated God, I should be buried away from view. Afflicted indeed, humbled and agitated, I thought over the matter for a long time, till finally, becoming more quiet, I commenced to examine the subject without commotion, thoroughly, and with the greatest care before God. Having first implored, as usual, the help of God in prayer, I consulted the glory of God primarily, then the salvation of my neighbor and my own salvation, as the only objects worthy of my consideration. After much and serious reflection, I am forced to the conclusion that it is simply and in every way impossible for me to accept the episcopal honor and burden; hence I refuse the proffered elevation, as being totally unfit for it.

"However, as of old, I am ready, if my superiors deem proper, to go and work in that vineyard under an administrator to be appointed there; for the news that reached us about the state of religion in that region is truly sad, and imperiously demands whatever help can be got. In case I should go there to work, I would desire my countrymen who might come to join me.

"C. NERINCKX." *

* Baltimore MSS.

The Rev. Benedict Joseph Flaget had also refused the mitre, and, upon Archbishop Carroll telling him he must accept, had referred the whole matter to his ecclesiastical superior, Mr. Emery, in Paris. This step delayed the consecration of the Bishop of Bardstown for over two years. Archbishop Carroll, not yet aware of Father Nerinckx' refusal of the dignity conferred on him, communicated the unwelcome intelligence to the missionary by letter, dated October 23, 1808, insisting, at the same time, upon his acceptance of the office, and inclosing a letter from Bishop Concanen, consecrated in Rome for New York.

Father Nerinckx again refused; but, alarmed at the good opinion the Archbishop had conceived of his abilities, and afraid lest, as in the case of Bishop Flaget, the Metropolitan would tell him he must accept, he resolved to forestall his kind intentions, and called upon his brother priests to assist him in ridding himself of the burden of the episcopacy. "Desirous of retaining him in Kentucky, where his labors were so fruitful, Mr. Badin, in conjunction with the Dominican Fathers of St. Rose, petitioned the Holy See that he might not be compelled to accept an office which would tear him from a field of labor in which he had already proved so eminently useful. They also represented that the great delicacy of conscience characteristic of Mr. Nerinckx, would render him exceedingly unhappy in so arduous a situation, if it would not wholly

unfit him for its responsible duties."* However, the humble priest did not dread the work; he was willing to take a share of the burden on his shoulders, provided the honor rested on a more willing head; and on the 3d of December he wrote to the Archbishop the following letter:

"FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS XAVIER, 1808.

"*Right Rev. and Illustrious Bishop:*

"On the first day of this month, I received the honored letters of your Grace, dated October 23d, from which it appears that my recent letter had not reached you at the time of your writing. Truly, I have every reason to rejoice in the Lord from the bottom of my heart, for the consoling statement contained in them, viz: that the Holy Father is so well pleased with the improving condition of ecclesiastical affairs in these States. Any one who takes ever so little interest in the welfare of the church, must be moved to tears of joy. To be sincere, however, I must confess that these good tidings are mixed with some sad ones: We deeply regret the danger we are in of not obtaining our Bishop elect, that man approved by the universal suffrage of his brethren, dear to God, just, kind, and pious. In the meantime we will not doubt that this, the amiable will of God, will be vigorously and sweetly brought to execution by the bowels of mercy of our Lord.

"But there is another reason why my soul re-

*"Sketches of Kentucky," pg. 200.

fuses to be comforted: I have looked into this matter of my appointment, considered it again and again; and, truly, in whatever light I look upon it, whithersoever I turn for counsel either of my own heart or around me, one and all loudly proclaim that it is entirely impossible that such be the will of God toward me, unless He wanted to punish and chastise in his wrath this poor people as well as me. Ah! would to God that these good men, who had some share in bringing about my nomination, knew me as I am! If I were foolish and insolent enough to accept the dignity, they would, indeed, have reason enough to lament my own inevitable ruin, and the irreparable loss of those who would be committed to my care. But my fears are allayed, seeing by the letter of Bishop Concanen, that the whole thing is left to the discretion of your Lordship, who is well aware by this time of my total inability; so that there is little room left for the least suspicion of my promotion. In order, however, that I may not seem to 'count my life more precious than myself,' and to shirk tribulations and labors, I shall most willingly accompany the one who is to preside over that flock, if I can in any way be of use to him; if my superiors approve of it, I am ready to spend my strength in some part of that land, to all accounts, really 'made desolate with desolation,' to the best of my ability. I therefore beg and entreat of your Lordship, to whom I have intrusted my all from the moment of my arrival

here, as to a father, to settle this matter in your pious sagacity, for the greater glory of God and the salvation of my own soul. . . .

"Commending myself again and again to the prayers and sacrifices of your fatherly solicitude, I remain,

"Of your Lordship,

"The most humble and obedient servant,

"C. NERINCKX."*

That this letter had not its desired effect appears from the following letter of Archbishop Carroll, written to a friend of Father Nerinckx, in Louvain—Mr. Peemans—the French original text of which I found in the Bollandist Library of the Jesuit Fathers, in Brussels:

"BALTIMORE, *February* 2, 1809.

"*Dear Sir:*

"I had the pleasure of receiving, three days ago, your long expected letter, dated June 3d, of last year, containing another, too short to satisfy my curiosity, addressed to Messrs. Beschter and Wouters; the latter note not being sealed, I have thought that I rightly interpreted your intention by reading it, and forwarding it to your friends, who, as well as Mr. Nerinckx, Henry and Malavé, are constantly busy in the vineyard of the Lord and render the most important services for the salvation of souls. I notice that

* Baltimore MSS.

you had grave apprehensions with regard to Mr. Nerinckx, caused by a letter of Mr. Badin; but it is with the sweetest pleasure I am enabled to say that his sickness has not been a long one, and that he has entirely recovered; you will likely have the proof of it at his own hands by the same vessel which carries this letter. That vessel had to leave a month ago, and I sent to New York a heavy package of his letters for Brabant, addressed to N——, and, indeed, you were not forgotten. In the midst of his joy at the erection of an Episcopal See in Kentucky, and at the nomination of Mr. Flaget to fill it (a man who, under the present circumstances, seems destined by Providence to unite all differences of opinion in the diocese confided to his pastoral solicitude), Mr. Nerinckx is grieved at his own nomination to the Apostolic Prefecture of the diocese of Louisiana, and says he will abscond in a Trappist cell rather than to accept the dignity. But nothing is as yet decided or will be until the very uncertain arrival of Mgr. Concanen, Bishop of New York, who is to be the bearer of all the Briefs, etc., relative to the changes which the government of this western portion of the church is to undergo. . . . Mr. Nerinckx, of your diocese of Mechlin, a most zealous missionary, is nominated Vicar Apostolic of Louisiana. . . .

"†JOHN, Bishop of Baltimore."

As late as September, the Bishop of Baltimore writes to the same Mr. Peemans:

"BALTIMORE, *September* 5, 1809.

"*Dear Sir:*

"I received with pleasure and gratitude, on the 7th of August, your letter of June 8th. . . . Mgr. Flaget, Bishop elect of Bardstown, in Kentucky, who returns to France to obtain some priests of St. Sulpice to accompany him to his diocese, seems determined to decline his nomination unless he succeeds in that mission. If Kentucky loses him, it will be a subject of eternal regret. Distinguished by all the virtues necessary to an ecclesiastic, he is especially so by his sweetness of temper, and his spirit of conciliation, which is just now absolutely necessary to the one who will be at the head of that diocese. . . .

"Mr. Nerinckx still manifests the same aversion to his nomination as administrator of the diocese of Louisiana. I have just now renewed my entreaties and expostulations with him on that head, and God alone knows if he will persist in his refusal after the reception of the Bulls, which are still looked for in vain, the Bishop of New York not having yet arrived. The Trappists have left Kentucky for Louisiana, and Mr. Nerinckx, who is unwilling to shoulder the government of that diocese, desires, however, to accompany them thither in order to be near them and to work for the salvation of souls. . . .

"†JOHN, Bishop of Baltimore."

When the news of Father Nerinckx' nomination reached his old parishioners of Everberg-Meerbeke, in Brabant, the ladies of the parish immediately set about preparing and making up a complete suit of episcopal vestments, which they had almost ready to send to him, when they received the intelligence that he had firmly refused the proffered dignity.*

Determined to leave no stone unturned in order to escape the position which, in his humility, he thought so much above his capacity, Father Nerinckx resolved to call to his aid the influence of the Right Rev. Leonard Neale, Bishop of Gortyna and Coadjutor of Baltimore, who, having known him at Georgetown, would, he felt assured, plead his cause with the Archbishop more successfully than he could himself. In a letter of January 16, 1809, to that prelate, he humbly but persistently represented the impossibility of his consenting to so "sad an election, foreboding nothing but evil to the church, brought about by to him unknown, and likely well meant influences; but so glaring an incongruity that he knew it would be enough to bring the matter to the notice of his Lordship, who had learned by personal experience how unfit a subject he was for that position, to have his name struck from the list of appointments."† He also remarked that after the advent of the new Bishop, there would be abundance of priests

*See "Sketches of Kentucky," pg. 200.

†Baltimore MSS.

in Kentucky, and ended by requesting the Coadjutor's help in securing an appointment in Upper Louisiana, where priests were few.

But how horrified was the poor missionary, when, upon receiving a reply, he found out that Bishop Neale understood him as requesting to be appointed to a new bishopric in Louisiana! Never was man in a greater hurry to answer a letter:

"At the Priests' Land, near Bardstown,
"Washington Co., Ky., *July* 26, 1809.

"*Right Rev. Sir:*

" . . . I must have made an egregious mistake, since your Lordship writes as if I had asked to be sent to that part of Louisiana for which Rome intends to provide. May the Lord God avert such a misfortune from me, and leave me sense and honor enough never to presume to accept such a dignity! It is true that a conditional arrangement of that kind has been sent from Rome, and how such a thing could ever be thought of, I am at a loss to account for. But that should not have troubled me much, since I was fully convinced that your Lordship and the Archbishop of Baltimore would correct the mistake which crept, I do not know how, into the letters of the Right Rev. Doctor Concanen, and would suggest the name of another worthy of the honor, and competent for the work. I hereby correct my mistake, my Lord, viz: the *mission* I was asking for is situated in *Upper*

Louisiana, some distance from the little town of St. Louis, in the vicinity of which the Trappists are finally trying to settle down, and some three hundred miles from here. The place designated in the Roman letters is in *Lower Louisiana*, the metropolis of which is New Orleans and more than one thousand miles distant from here. If I expressed myself inadequately, please excuse me; and procure me, I beseech you, the grace of ending my days in my humble position. . . .

"Your humble and obedient servant,

"C. NERINCKX."*

Now that he thought that matter set aside, and considering that with the arrival of the new Bishop, Kentucky would have a full supply of priests, Father Nerinckx turned his longing eyes to the abandoned missions of Upper Louisiana, the poverty of which tempted his disinterested zeal. More and more convinced in his own mind that he was rather a precursor to his brethren in the priesthood than a real missionary—a border pioneer, whose duty it was to clear up the land and prepare it for the more elaborate cultivation of subsequent tillers—he now directly applied to Archbishop Carroll "to be assigned to some of the stations in Louisiana deprived of laborers, which Father Badin has enumerated to your Lordship. There are a great many such, but, if it be the will of God, it would perhaps be best to send me to the vicinity

* Baltimore MSS.

of the Trappist Fathers, who tell me they will settle in the parish of *Cahokias*, not far from a place commonly called St. Louis, where they hope to be of some help to Rev. Ollivier and Rev. Maxwell." *.

But the storm of abuse, spoken of in the preceding chapter, which had scarcely subsided, now rose with more vehemence than ever, this time against Father Badin; and his guest being the only one in whom he could confide or to whom he could apply for good counsel and efficient help, the Vicar-general insisted upon his remaining in Kentucky until peace should be restored.

Considerable trouble had been brewing in St. Michael's mission, where the people showed the most culpable indifference for priest and church; the cemetery was so badly neglected that the cattle had free access to it and desecrated the graves. The missionaries had vainly endeavored to bring these catholics to a sense of their duty, and five consecutive attempts of Rev. Badin had resulted in utter failure. Father Nerinckx, always more sensible to the wrongs done to others than to his own, went thither on Sexagesima Sunday of 1809, determined to settle matters to the satisfaction of priest and people; and he succeeded. Three families, among them Nancy Elder, were prevailed upon to come forward and publicly submit to the church authority, by subscribing the formula prescribed

* Letter to Archbishop Carroll. Baltimore MSS.

by the Archbishop of Baltimore; and, in a few weeks, only seven families in the whole mission, who could not easily be reached because living at the very outskirts of the settlements, remained stubborn and persevered in their opposition to Father Badin; "and all that," writes Father Nerinckx to the Archbishop, "because they do not want him to be Bishop of Kentucky! Indeed, they could fare worse; although that reverend gentleman has repeatedly said in my presence that he would refuse the appointment if tendered to him. They could have expressed their views with less harm to the church and to themselves. Their conventicles always end in riots and dances; several of these, called frolics, frisks, or dancings, having taken place in Holy Cross congregation, ending in women's fights; and, at the very time that I had announced the establishment of the confraternity of the Holy Name in St. Charles parish, a number of so-called catholics, *ejusdem farinæ*, held dances on the limits of that congregation."*

Father Badin suffered greatly from all these petty persecutions; but his ever trusty and less impulsive confrere consoled him with the thought that they were fighting the good fight, and that their endeavors for the good of the people were appreciated by the many and applauded by their superiors. The venerable Mr. Nagot wrote to him from Baltimore: "*Constans esto.* Thanks be to the Lord that we have excellent

* Baltimore MSS.

and good teachers here; but it is a matter of surprise to us, that a country reclaimed from the savages only about twelve years ago, should so far exceed the seat of the government of the United States in point of piety and christian discipline, that we can not but attribute a great part of the merit of the miracle to your zeal and fervor. . . ." Bishop Neale encouraged them in the following words: "You have entered the lists to promote the grand work; never yield till you accomplish it." And these sentiments were indorsed by one whose approbation they prized above all others, the Patriarch of the American Church, Archbishop Carroll, who wrote: "I am sure that many abuses will be prevented, if you succeed in your commendable endeavors, and I encourage you to perseverance."

Father Nerinckx now thought that nothing further interfered with his plans for the evangelization of Upper Louisiana.* A number of catholic families had emigrated from Kentucky to that region in 1797, and settled in Perry county, in the neighborhood of what was subsequently known as *St. Mary's of the Barrens.* Josiah Miles, William Carico, and several other families, who subsequently moved, in 1810, to St. Louis county and settled near the mouth of the Missouri river, having heard of Father Nerinckx' intention of going out there, asked him to

* Upper Louisiana included all the territory of the present State of Missouri.

accompany them; and our missionary once more wrote to Archbishop Carroll, urging the opportuneness of his being sent to Upper Louisiana, for the following reasons:

"1. There are two villages, *St. Louis* and *St. Charles*, about twenty miles distant one from the other, which have together a population of about two hundred families, and are fifty miles away from the nearest priest.

"2. There is a congregation, called *Tucker's Settlement*, of about sixty families, seventy miles away from the former place, and another known by the name of *Fenwick* having twenty families, and thirty miles away from the first. All these people are scattered far and wide and never see a priest.

"3. Many infidel *Indians* live in the vicinity, and it is asserted that my labors among them would not be without fruit.

"4. This extensive field, perhaps ready for the harvest, is never visited by a priest. What faith, what morals, can these poor people have? How many of them who perhaps lose their souls for the want of an evangelical laborer!

"5. There are only two priests in the whole region, and they live one hundred miles apart. One of them, Rev. Mr. Olivier, is a very pious man, but old and totally ignorant of the English language. His pastoral charge extends, moreover, over a district entirely distinct from the one I refer to, and, if reports are correct, he will soon be forced by old age or death to vacate the

field, for his congregation stands already now in need of an assistant priest. The other priest, Rev. Mr. Maxwell, is sufficiently known; he resides seventy miles from Tucker's Settlement. This is a sad state of affairs, my Lord. Practically speaking, and taking into consideration the limited work Father Olivier is capable of, the position of Mr. Maxwell, and the little help the Trappists will give, this large number of families, scattered over an area of more than two hundred miles in extent, is, so to say, without a priest.

"Having, therefore, considered before God the wants of this mission, I can not see how I can decline that reasonable call unless my superiors decide otherwise. Your Lordship having the necessary jurisdiction to provide for those missions, I humbly entreat you to send me at once the necessary faculties, instructions, etc., to emigrate to Upper Louisiana, for these poor people most ardently wish for a priest.* . . ."

The Archbishop's answer was any thing but favorable to the projects of our missionary, and renewed all his former fears. The delay of Bishop Flaget in accepting the mitre, caused a great deal of annoyance to Archbishop Carroll, who thought that, a Bishop having been appointed for Kentucky, he could no longer exercise jurisdiction in that State or grant the dispensations asked for by the Kentucky clergy. This he gave as a reason for not granting Father

* Baltimore MSS.

Nerinckx' request, pleading at the same time the wants of Lower Louisiana. Religion suffered greatly in New Orleans, and the Archbishop intimated that he felt disposed to force upon the humble priest the acceptance of the administration of that diocese.

Father Nerinckx again wrote, trying to convince Archbishop Carroll of his inability to perform the expected task, and expressing his honest opinion that greater than an administrator's powers were needed in the present emergency. His were conscientious motives, and his letter so thoroughly explains the situation of affairs, that we venture to give it in full, at the risk of trying the patience of some of our readers.

It bears no date, but must have been written in the Fall of 1809—in August—as appears from the context:

"*Right Rev. and Illustrious Sir:*

"I understand from your honored letters that your reason for not granting my wishes is the delay of Bishop Concanen's arrival, who is the bearer of Roman Briefs that will put an end to your doubts about the controverted jurisdiction. Personally, I am of opinion that, till now, your Lordship's jurisdiction over the whole diocese has not been limited, since no circumscription of new dioceses has been determined upon. Such at least was the practice in the old country, where, although nominated to a pastoral bene-

fice, we could do nothing until we had taken the customary oath before the Ordinary; the jurisdiction of the attending priest remained entire until the Elect had fulfilled all the formalities of the Curia. But I willingly acknowledge my ignorance in these canonical processes, with which I never had a reason to suspect I should have any thing to do.

"I am often covered with confusion when I reflect how troublesome a writer I must appear to your Lordship, whom I so frequently annoy with trifling affairs; but you have so far dealt patiently with my foolishness, and I beseech you to hear me again with fatherly kindness. The subject will not seem of little consequence to your Paternity, since you are usually so solicitous about the salvation of one single soul. Pardon me, therefore, my Lord, if I appear struggling to 'deliver my only one from the hand of the dog,' for I have suffered persecution and exile for it.

"I have noted several passages in your welcome letter, upon which I shall, with all due reverence, present the following comments:

"1. I would like to live in the vicinity of the Trappists solely to have near me a confessor who would help me with his advice and prayers in all difficulties, whilst I could, in the intervals, make such excursions among the settlements as my health and strength would permit; for, from what I hear, there is, in Upper Louisiana,

work without end or intermission, and no temporal comfort whatever.

"2. When I consider the state of the Kentucky diocese at large, under such favorable auspices of a coming abundance of laborers, the necessity of my remaining any longer in this region completely disappears; whilst in that part of Louisiana I was speaking of, extreme want and penury call most emphatically for any priest who can be spared. It is entirely destitute of workers, over one hundred and fifty miles away from a priest; it counts hundreds of families—catholics, or rather to be made catholics over again—scattered in divers settlements. Many new families are continually going out there, and will emigrate in greater numbers when they see me or any other priest settled there. That the hopes of a greater number of priests in the Kentucky diocese will be realized without a doubt, is abundantly proved by the promises of the Sulpitians, the notable increase of Dominican Fathers, the erection of a Seminary, etc.; and, in all that, there ought to be an excess of consolation to Rev. Father Badin, who is undoubtedly of greater worth than I am.

"3. But let us see how we should look upon what your Lordship says toward the end of your letter (and that without hyperbola, I am sure,) of the extreme and unutterable miseries and difficulties of the diocese of New Orleans: There is, you say, great corporal misery—this I have, with the grace of God, learned to despise—but

immeasurably greater spiritual misery, which ought to be looked upon as extreme, from the very fact that the present very worthy Vicar-general Olivier has tried every thing in vain to remedy the evil. I have heard as much here, and that more than once from men who had heard and seen it—been witnesses to it all. But what would I, in my nothingness, succeeding to so worthy and experienced a man, effect, where so great a one has worked in vain? . . . Allow me to observe, in the next place, of how little weight the authority of a Vicar-general has been considered, even in a man who is most worthy of the position, and who has been substituted in the place of another Vicar of similar merit and equal ill-success. Remember how shamefully that authority has been despised by clergy and people, which your Lordship so justly styles by their right name of firebrands of discord, scum of many nations, controlled by that God-forsaken Anthony ——,* a man of the most wicked dispositions, who is the cause of all the trouble there; and your Lordship will have to come to the natural conclusion that the hope of a successful end to all these difficulties can be based only upon an authority of sufficient influence to enforce obedience to its commands, and backed by a science profound enough to 'convince the gainsayers.' That such an authority can be no less than the episcopal one, is clearly proved by the two unsuccessful attempts of two

* He subsequently submitted to Bishop Dubourg.

Vicar-generals; for episcopal authority alone can quell all pretexts, subterfuges, and cavillations. I am convinced that the people, and perhaps also some of the clergy, will have respect enough for religious principles to give to their Bishop the honor which is his due, and to see the difference between episcopal and any other inferior authority.

"An observation akin to this is, that, if a Bishop has to be everywhere perfect in all respects, he must be more especially so in New Orleans; and, Right Reverend and dearest Father in Christ, what kind of administrator would I be in such a position, I should like to know? What a figure I would cut, indeed! They would justly scoff at such a foolish leader, and, to use the words of Peter Bles: 'Illiterate and foolish, will I not, as a Bishop, be an idol of grief and sadness, which God selected in his wrath for the desolation of the people, . . so that it will come to pass what is read in St. Matthew: "*When you shall see the abomination of desolation in the holy place*," etc.' Nor can I be said to have been nominated by the Holy See for the administration of that diocese, and hence designated for it by Divine Providence. Why? Because it is plain to me that the very opposite is to be construed from the Brief. The Holy See itself acknowledges how little I am known, since it has recourse to your Lordship, to whom I am scarcely known for one or two years, and that only by vague rumors from a most distant

region. These rumors seem to me to be altogether too doubtful to make them the basis for the election of a man, otherwise unknown, to so tremendous a ministry, in such a fearful perturbation of the church, and that in a place so far from help and counsel, that it has scarcely been able to obtain a remedy to one single evil during the lapse of so many years, besides being hampered, or at least left to its fate, by the civil power.

"These arguments seem to me conclusive ones; at least I can not find any thing to object to them. Nor do I hereby intend to find fault with the way my superiors have acted. They may have been imposed upon, and deceived by false or erroneous reports; nor was any thing, up till now, determined upon. Besides, my mind is continually agitated with thoughts and reflections, the conclusion of which is ever the one suggested by St. Gregory in his L. S. Pastor., chapter 9: 'He who is void of virtues should not come forward, even if forced to.'

"To open my heart entirely to you, the place, not the honor, would be my due; because no comfort—a thing which I never merited—but undoubted and great difficulties, which I have, alas! but too often provoked, await me there. I would ardently wish to meet these, were it not that my lack of virtue would insure my inevitable ruin.

"I am detaining your Lordship too long, and

would detain you ever so much longer, were I only to indicate in a few words my many reasons for lamentation. I will therefore condense in a few sentences what I would like to say and prove in many: 1. There is no need of my staying in Kentucky, nor will there be after the advent of the Bishop. 2. I might perhaps be of some use in that part of Louisiana, where so many heathens, heretics, nominal catholics, etc., live, scattered among many widely distant settlements without any priest. 3. In no being could you find qualities more diametrically opposed to those which the great ministry of a Bishop demands, than there appear even at first sight in a poor and miserable candidate, who urgently asks for the glory of God and for the honor of our much beloved and too greatly afflicted mother church, that his soul, and that of so many others to whom he could not but be a greater cause of ruin, may be spared. . . .

"Whilst I finish my letter, we celebrate the feast of St. Philip Benitius, in the lesson of whose office I find that he concealed himself in the mountains of Tuniatum as long as necessary, in order not to be forced to accept the burden of the Pastoral Office; and your Paternity knows better than I do, how many similar facts the catalogue of saintly men records. If such a thing was commendable in a saint, what will not a poor miserable sinner as I am do? Since, however, I stumbled in the first Nocturn of this day on those words of Ecclesiastes: 'Children,

hear the judgment of your Father, and so do that you may be saved;' and in the Gospel of the Mass: 'You are my friends, if you do what I command you; . . . you have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you;' and since I have always made it my rule of conduct to hear, in all things, 'the Bishops whom the Holy Ghost has placed to rule the church of God,' I therefore repeat what I said so often—for 'anguish surrounds me, aye, the sorrows of hell encompass me'—I commend again my life and death to your Paternity, so that I may finally know the will of God.

"Your Lordship will, I am sure, excuse me, remembering that if careful deliberation is required anywhere, it is without doubt necessary when a thing is to be decided for ever. And if your Lordship coincides with my views in sending me to *Upper Louisiana*—and without doubt you have the necessary jurisdiction to do so—I beg you will dispatch my letters as soon as possible, for many from Kentucky are going out there this fall, and I could save expenses in their company. A thousand thanks for your paternal solicitude toward

"Your humble and obedient servant,

"C. NERINCKX." *

The Archbishop could no longer withstand the earnest prayers and unselfish reasons of the humble priest; on the other hand, the "Sover-

* Baltimore MSS.

eign Pontiff had yielded to the entreaties of Mr. Nerinckx, supported by the suffrage of his brethren in the ministry; and he did not insist on his accepting the appointment."* And the following extract of a letter of Father Nerinckx to Archbishop Carroll, dated November 15, 1809, tells the result: "The Dominican Father Fenwick has just arrived in Kentucky, bearer of the good news that, in the opinion of your Lordship, I would not suit for the place. That has been my constant personal belief, and the opinion of all people of sense. And now I am freed from that nomination—*Benedicam Domino in omni tempore; semper laus ejus in ore meo!*" "I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall be always in my mouth!" exclaimed the thankful priest, with genuine delight.

Archbishop Carroll approved at the same time of Father Nerinckx' resolution to migrate to the missions of Upper Louisiana, for the reasons given in his former letter, and pronounced it "apparently inspired by the spirit of God." But Father Badin being his Vicar-general for the Far West, the Prelate directed Father Nerinckx to apply to him for the necessary faculties. The latter did not in the least relish that way of acting, for, as he wrote to Baltimore: "I know Father Badin well, and to commit this matter to him, is to refuse my request peremptorily." And so it was. The Vicar-general had no one whom he could depend

* "Sketches of Kentucky."

upon for help; the Dominicans were not under his jurisdiction, and Rev. O'Flynn, but lately arrived, could hardly be relied upon to settle permanently in the Kentucky mission. He therefore insisted upon Father Nerinckx remaining at his post.

Truly, man proposes and God disposes! Father Nerinckx' reasons for desiring the Louisiana mission were praiseworthy; his Bishop thought him inspired by God for the salvation of souls; and, in the light of the extreme misery of these abandoned people, we are inclined to look upon Rev. Badin's motives for retaining him as unreasonable; yet the inscrutable designs of God's Providence willed it so. The true work of Father Nerinckx in Kentucky had not yet begun; and for that work of love—the foundation of a religious community which was to cover Kentucky and the Southwestern States with educational establishments—God willed that he should remain.

CHAPTER XII.

1810.

Missionary labors.—St. Anthony's, Rough Creek.—St. James', Clifty.—St. Bernard's, Adair City.—Other settlements.—Father Nerinckx' courage, cheerfulness, and kindness.—His adventure with a wolf.—His labors in the confessional.—The fruits of his zeal.—A touching incident.

Father Nerinckx' mind being once more at rest—for he always looked upon the will of the least of his superiors as being the will of God—he set on foot new plans for the extension of our Holy Faith in Kentucky, which, he was now satisfied, would be his home and the field of his labors.

"Rev. Badin having come from *Louisville* in March, 1810, with the pleasing information that religious matters were prospering in that promising hamlet,"* Father Nerinckx left St. Stephen's on a missionary tour. The results of his observations and his plans for the future are embodied in the following letters† to Archbishop Carroll:

* Baltimore MSS. Rev. Nerinckx' letter to Archbishop Carroll of March 13, 1810.

† Baltimore MSS.

"*April* 14, 1810.

"*Right Rev. Sir:*

" . . . Last month I was sent to the *Rough Creek* congregation of St. Anthony, about eighty miles from here.* There seems to be room in that circuit for about four hundred families, who might settle there and make a very good living. I am in hopes of getting five hundred acres of land for the church, and our catholics are already circulating subscription lists to enable them to build three churches in that region. About forty families have actually settled there, and that number will soon increase if I go with them, for many suffer want here because straitened in too narrow a circuit. St. Anthony's is about half-way between our episcopal city [Bardstown] and an incipient settlement on the Ohio called Redbank,† where there are at present ten catholic families, and which has great prospects and a reasonable hope of becoming a very populous city. I have therefore resolved to select it as my resident station. . . .

"We hope our new Bishop will soon arrive. We expect him daily, together with some priests to help us. . . .

"I remain,

"Your Lordship's

Humble and obedient servant,

"C. NERINCKX."

*On the Long Lick, Breckinridge county.

†Now *Henderson*.

"*May*, 1810.*

"*Right Rev. Sir:*

"I profit of this opportunity to render you an account of what has lately been done in these missions. Father Badin asked me, some time ago, to visit the congregation on *Rough Creek*. I visited it and found the people, who, for the last few years (whether justly or not, I know not), enjoy a not very enviable reputation, very much afraid of me, to say nothing more. . . . But this panic soon gave way to peace and benevolence; and, with the help of God, I succeeded, during my first visit, in raising a subscription for the land and the church, which, with some help out of my own purse, amounts now to $800, about a hundred of which are in silver specie.

"From there, I traveled through a rather extensive tract of land that lies within a range of perhaps one hundred and twenty miles, and in which there is said to be arable land enough to comfortably settle four hundred families. It is situated along the banks of the Ohio river, from which it runs back fifteen, and in some places as far as thirty miles. The ground is, generally speaking, better than in our vicinity, being fertilized by rivers; but at present the whole region is little more than a desert. I found ten, if not eleven spots, where missionary stations might conveniently be erected, but have not as

*This letter is not dated; but its Bardstown postmark bears date May 31st, and the context clearly points to 1810.

yet examined things sufficiently to warrant a decision in the matter; I hope to be able to do so within a fortnight. Many families are preparing to go out there, and entreat me to go with them; nor can I refuse; because, although I am in constant doubt about my own spiritual interests, the good of the church and the temporal welfare of our catholics seem to demand it; and, since it is apparently expedient that I should remain in Kentucky to be of some help to priests and people, I can not do this more efficiently than by going out with them. About fifty catholic families are at present scattered over that region, some living a hundred miles from here; and I feel confident that within a year, more than one hundred families (indeed, I should not wonder if they numbered two hundred,) will join these in the different settlements. This would considerably lighten the burden of the priests who reside here, and increase mine, nor does the plan displease Rev. Father Badin.

"Captain John Hanley gives to the church four hundred acres on the *Adam's Fork*, fifteen miles from Rough Creek. I will try to make him increase the grant to six hundred acres, because I would like to have a school for girls connected with it, and he once before offered that much to the sisters of the congregation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

"N. Beits, a Methodist preacher, offers two

hundred acres on Rough Creek; and Thomas Smith, a preacher's son, twenty dollars toward the building of a chapel.

"Mr. Stoddard gives us five hundred acres in Clifty, where he once offered five thousand. I think this large and liberal offer should have been accepted at the time. I have accepted the five hundred just mentioned, for which your Grace will please give in my name to Mr. Stoddard the thanks of the church. I have selected this grant in the neighborhood of *St. James* congregation, where two or three catholic families have just now commenced building. I wish we could obtain a similar grant a few miles away from this one; in the course of time, another congregation might be started there. True, the greater portion of that farm is rather poor land; but it might perhaps suit the poorer classes, unable to buy a home in more fertile quarters. Inclosed please find a letter for Mr. Stoddard, in which I ask for five hundred acres more. He is perhaps not aware that I know of his five thousand offer, so that your Grace can act as you see fit; may be you will obtain more than five hundred acres. I would like you to transact this business immediately if possible, because the sooner catholics buy the land, the cheaper they will get it.

"The church of *St. Clare* will be finished this month. Although small, it has cost me almost three years of incessant labor to build it, owing to the lack of zeal of the thirty-four families

constituting this congregation, which I have attended for four years without one cent of salary.

"About six months ago, we have bought in my *St. Bernard's* congregation, Adair county,* where the Trappists used to live, four hundred and thirty-four acres of land, at one dollar in silver an acre. I have personally contributed $100, and donated the sacred vestments. There are thirteen catholic families, all but one meriting well of the church, and we have commenced building a chapel which I wish to finish before winter sets in. The subscription that I took up among these newly settled poor people for the purchase of the land and the building of the church exceeds $800; so true it is that good will with poverty is worth more for the honor of God, than bad will with all the treasures of the deep. I beg, therefore, that when I leave, this people, who, considering their small means and numbers, have so willingly and liberally provided for the church and priest, have also a share in the kind offices of the church. I have promised to attend them as long as I can; but this place will be two hundred miles from the extreme limit of the new tract; however, I desire to finish the building of the church, and I may perhaps live there for a short time, when, used up, I shall patiently expect death. Being remote from all worldly noise, this settlement is not likely to become very populous. . . .

* Now Casey county.

"If any vestments arrive for me, send them at once, for I have exhausted my own treasury in procuring them, and we stand yet in need of a great many. With due reverence, I remain,

"Of your Lordship,

"The humble and obedient servant,

"C. NERINCKX."

"*August* 17, 1810.

"*Right Rev. Sir:*

" . . . Be kind enough to address your letters to the station for which I am just preparing to leave.

"There are at least ten places, and that at a considerable distance one from the other, in which churches may be built.

"1. *Adam's Creek*, already known by the name of Loretto,* twenty miles from Rough Creek. Captain John Hanley gives four hundred acres of land to the church in that place.

"2. *Clifty*, in Grayson county, thirty-five miles from Loretto.† The church has five hundred acres of land there.

"3. *Hardingsburg*, twenty-six miles from Loretto. The church possesses three acres of land in that town.

"4. *Hartford*, seventeen miles from Loretto,

* It never came to any thing, and the name was soon forgotten. It had nevertheless partly been settled by catholics, as appears from Father Nerinckx' appeal, *infra*, Chap. XV.

† The distances are measured from *Adam's Creek*. Loretto, in Marion county, was not founded till two years later.

where the church also has three acres of land in the town.*

"5. *Little Yellow Bank*, forty miles from Loretto. Land is here promised for a church, and a subscription started to build it.†

"6. *Panther Creek*, six miles from Loretto, where there is a good prospect of getting a donation of land.‡

"7. *Highland*, over seventy miles from Loretto. A catholic of that place, Robert Alvey, gives four hundred acres of good land to the church.§

"8. In *Christian county*, over seventy miles from Loretto. More than five hundred acres of good land are here offered to the church.‖

* In Ohio county. The aged Father Durbin, of Princeton, observes that a lot was given in that locality by Mr. Berry, which was subsequently lost to the church. No settlement was made there.

† This is a small creek in Breckinridge county, below Flint Island.

‡ Says Father Durbin: "There was no settlement of catholics on Panther Creek, when I took charge of Davies county, as part of my mission, fifty-two years ago, or in 1823. There were three families, the men non-catholics, near where St. Lawrence stands, fifteen miles above Owensboro. There was no catholic settlement where St. Raphael and St. Alphonsus congregations are today."

§ *Sacred Heart*, Union county. Father Durbin says that two hundred acres were subsequently bought from Robert Alvey. They are now owned by the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, who have a flourishing boarding-school there, known as St. Vincent's Academy. The present Sacred Heart church, on the edge of that farm, and about three hundred yards from the Academy, is a large brick building, seven miles back of Uniontown, on the Ohio river.

‖ The catholic settlement was not made there.

"9. *The Great Yellow Banks*, forty miles from Loretto. Here also four hundred acres are promised.*

"10. *The Fork of Rough.* Nothing definite.

"The priest stationed in this tract will, from the very beginning, have to travel over a district one hundred and twenty miles in length, and at least seventy miles in width, through a desert land, where there is no way and no water; for, up till now, little land is occupied by actual settlers. Hence I have to prepare myself for a very hard life and arduous labor, although my strength of body and soul is already declining. It will be very hard for me to live all alone at such a great distance from the help of another priest, but my brother has manifested his intention of joining me here.† Our people seem to be universally delighted, and approve of my going there, hoping to obtain homesteads and farms in that district at lower rates. At

* A creek in Davies county, five miles from Owensboro (Yellow Banks). There is now a large body of catholic descendants of the original catholic settlers from Maryland, in Davies county, also in Union county. Many small congregations are located in Hardin, Meade (St. Teresa's church is in Meade county, two miles from the creek), Breckinridge, and other counties in the lower part of the State and adjacent to the Ohio river. But the great mass of the catholics are in Marion, Washington, and Nelson counties, which are the cradle of catholicity in Kentucky, where Father Nerinckx labored and spent the last years of his life.

† He never did. The work which awaited Charles Nerinckx in Kentucky also awaited John Henry in Somerstown, London, where he established a religious community of sisters for the education of the poor. He died in London, in the year 1855.

least, their saying, *never as yet has so much been done for the catholics,* seems to insinuate it. May the enterprise be pleasing to God as it is to men, and benefit the people and myself. . . .

"Yours, etc.,

"C. NERINCKX."

Truly, the holy man had a hard life of it, as will presently appear from extracts of the *Sketches of Kentucky,** which Archbishop Spalding borrowed from letters of Rev. Badin, published in the *London Miscellany* of 1825, and further extended with notes communicated to him by the same reverend gentleman, who was still living at the time the Archbishop published his book.

"Father Nerinckx' courage was unequaled. He feared no difficulties, and was appalled by no dangers. Through rain and storms; through snows and ice; over roads rendered almost impassable by the mud; over streams swollen by the rains, or frozen by the cold; by day and by night, in winter and summer, he might be seen traversing all parts of Kentucky in the discharge of his laborious duties. Far from shunning, he seemed even to seek hardships and dangers.

"He crossed wilderness districts, swam rivers, slept in the woods among the wild beasts;† and,

* "Sketches of Kentucky," pg. 138–141, *et passim.*

† Sometimes when he was asked by those at whose house he had arrived in the morning, "where he had slept on the pre-

while undergoing all this, he was in the habit of fasting and of voluntarily mortifying himself in many other ways. His courage and vigor seemed to increase with the labors and privations he had to indure. As his courage, so neither did his cheerfulness, ever abandon him. He seldom laughed or even smiled; but there was withal an air of contentment and cheerfulness about him which greatly qualified the natural austerity of his countenance and manners. He could, like the great Apostle, make himself "all to all, to gain all to Christ." He appeared even more at home in the cabin of the humblest citizen, or in the hut of the poor negro, than in the more pretending mansions of the wealthy.

"He was averse to giving trouble to others, especially to the poor. Often, when he arrived at a house in the night, he attended to his own horse, and took a brief repose in the stable, or in some out-house; and when the inmates of the house arose next morning, they frequently perceived him already up, and saying his office, or making his meditation.* He made it an invariable rule never to miss an appointment whenever it was at all possible to keep it. He often arrived at a distant station early in the morning, after having ridden during all the previous night. On these occasions, he heard confessions,

vious night?" he would answer cheerfully: "With Captain Dogwood,"—a familiar name for the *Cornelian cherry tree*, abounding in the woods of Kentucky.

* This often occurred, especially at the station on Clear Creek, Hardin county.

taught catechism, gave instructions, and said Mass for the people generally after noon; and he seldom broke his fast until three or four o'clock in the evening.

"In swimming rivers, he was often exposed to great danger. Once, in going to visit a sick person, he came to a stream which his companion knew to be impassable. Mr. Nerinckx took the saddle of his friend—who refused to venture—placed it on his own, and then remounting the horse, placed himself on his knees on the top of the two saddles, and thus crossed the flood, which flowed over his horse's back. On another occasion, he made a still more narrow escape. He was swept from his horse, which lost its footing and was carried away by the current; and the rider barely saved himself, and reached the other shore by clinging firmly to the horse's tail.

"On one of his missionary tours, he narrowly escaped being devoured by the wolves, which then greatly infested those portions of Kentucky which were not densely settled. While traveling to visit a distant station, in what is now Grayson county, but what was then almost an unreclaimed wilderness, he lost his way in the night. It was the dead of winter, and the darkness was so great that he could not hope to extricate himself from his painful situation. Meantime, whilst he was seeking a sheltered place, where he could take some repose, the famished wolves scented him, and came in hundreds, fiercely howling around him. With great pres-

ence of mind, he immediately remounted his horse, knowing that they would scarcely attack him while on horseback. He hallooed at the top of his voice, and temporarily frightened them off; but soon they returned to the charge, and kept him at bay during the whole night. Once or twice they seemed on the point of seizing his horse, and Mr. Nerinckx made the sign of the Cross and prepared himself for death; but a mysterious Providence watched over him, and he escaped, after sitting his horse the whole night.* With the dawn, the wolves disappeared.

"He had charge of six congregations, besides a much greater number of stations scattered over the whole extent of Kentucky. Wherever he could learn that there were a few catholic settlers, there he established a station or erected a church. The labor which he thus voluntarily took on himself, is almost incredible. To visit all his churches and stations generally required the space of at least six weeks.

"He never took any rest or recreation. He seemed always most happy, when most busily engaged. He seldom talked, except on business, or on God, on virtue, or on his missionary duties. On reaching a church or station, his confessional was usually thronged by penitents from the early dawn until midday. Before beginning to hear confessions he usually said some prayers with the people, and then gave them a

*The Archbishop learned this adventure from an aged citizen of Grayson county.

solid and familiar instruction on the manner of approaching the holy tribunal. If he seemed austere out of the confessional, he was in it a most kind, patient, and tender father. He spared no time nor pains to instruct his penitents, all of whom, without one exception, were deeply attached to him. To his instructions, chiefly in the confessional, are we to ascribe the piety and regularity of many among the living catholics of Kentucky.

"God blessed his labors with fruits so abundant and permanent as to console him for all his toils and privations. He witnessed a flourishing church growing up around him, in what had recently been a wilderness, inhabited only by fierce, wild beasts and untamable savages. He saw, in the virtues of his scattered flock, a revival of those which had rendered so illustrious the christians of the first ages of the church. . . . The results of his labors prove how much one good man, with the blessing of God, can achieve by his single efforts, prompted by the lofty motive of the Divine glory, and directed with simplicity of heart to one noble end.

"We will close the present chapter by relating one more incident in the life of this good missionary. The catholics were so much dispersed that he was often called to a distance of fifty and even a hundred miles, to visit the sick. On one occasion he was called to see a Mr. Keith, who lived in Bourbon county, eighty

miles off. The messenger arrived at the residence of Mr. Nerinckx early in the morning, and stated that he had left the sick man in a dying condition. Mr. Nerinckx lost not a moment. At five o'clock in the morning, he mounted his famous horse '*Printer*;' and after riding the whole ensuing night, reached the house of Mr. Keith at six o'clock the next morning.

"The poor man was already dead. He had just breathed his last. Ardently had he desired the succors of religion in his last struggle; repeatedly he had asked, 'whether the priest was coming?' In his anxiety he had dragged himself to the door of his cabin, to direct his straining eyes, now almost set in death, in the direction in which he expected the minister of God to approach.

"Mr. Nerinckx remained for some time with the afflicted family of the deceased, comforting them with the assurance that God had no doubt mercifully accepted the will for the deed in the deceased. He prayed with them over his remains, which he followed to their last resting place. He took occasion from the manner of his death to make a deep impression in the minds and hearts of the living, whom he exhorted 'to be always ready, for they knew not the day nor the hour,' when death might surprise them. After thus doing all the good he could accomplish, he returned, deeply affected by the scene he had witnessed."

CHAPTER XIII.

1811.

FATHER NERINCKX' BODILY STRENGTH.—HIS ADVENTURE WITH HARDIN.—CARRYING THE CROSS IN BULLITT COUNTY.—SALUTING THE NEGRO.—FATHER NERINCKX' SIMPLE ORATORY.—HIS SUCCESS IN MAKING CONVERTS.—ARRIVAL OF BISHOP FLAGET IN KENTUCKY.—THE EPISCOPAL PALACE.

THE powerful constitution and herculean strength which enabled the zealous Father Nerinckx to undergo the unusual trials of missionary life, under the burden of which many a man of equal zeal would have sunk, proved useful in more than one way, during his eventful career. Besides undertaking lengthy journeys on horseback to the distant missions through the then uninhabited wilds of Kentucky, he had to attend to the building of churches, a task which, in these pioneer days, was not a mere directing of the labors of others, but actual hard handiwork; and Father Nerinckx was always ready to do his share of the labor. Many illustrations of his bodily strength will be adduced in the course of this biography. "He generally worked bareheaded under the broiling sun, aiding the workmen in cutting timber, in clearing out the un-

dergrowth, and in every other species of hard labor; and in removing heavy timber, or, as it is commonly called, *rolling logs*, he usually lifted against two or three men of ordinary strength."*

But this merely natural gift, which, in polite society, would add very little to the esteem in which a priest is held by the public, proved also very useful in those parts, where the rude state of pioneer times made men less sensible to the advantages of education, and more easily impressed by physical skill, endurance, and strength of body. The following singular adventure, which is well known to all the older catholics of Kentucky, may serve as an illustration. We give it as related to Archbishop Spalding† by Mr. Vincent Gates, the pious attendant and companion of our missionary:

"Father Nerinckx was in the habit of rigidly enforcing order in the church, during the celebration of the divine mysteries. Protestants and persons of no religion often attended church, led thither chiefly by curiosity. These sometimes did not conform to the rules of propriety; and Mr. Nerinckx, who was little swayed by human respect, was not slow to admonish them of their faults in this particular. As he was not very well versed in the English language, and was by nature rather plain and frank, his admonitions were not always well understood or well received. Once, especially, a man by the name

*"Sketches of Kentucky," pg. 143.

†"Sketches of Kentucky," pg. 141–143.

of Hardin—a youth of powerful frame and strength, and somewhat of a bully—took great offense at something which Mr. Nerinckx had said, and which, it seems, he had entirely misunderstood. He openly declared that he would be avenged on the priest the first time that he would meet him alone.

"An opportunity soon occurred. Mr. Nerinckx was going to the church of St. Charles, from St. Stephen's, when Hardin waylaid him on the road. Springing from his hiding-place, he seized the bridle reins of Mr. Nerinckx' horse, and bade him stop, 'for that he intended to give him a sound drubbing.' At the same time, he cut one of the stirrup leathers, and ordered the rider to dismount; an order which was promptly complied with. Mr. Nerinckx remonstrated with him; told him that he had meant in nowise to offend or injure him; and that his profession wholly forbade him to wrangle or fight. Hardin, however, persisted, and was in the act of striking the priest, when the latter took hold of him, and quietly laid him on the ground, as though he had been the merest child; observing to him, meantime, with a smile, 'that he would neither strike nor injure him, but that he felt authorized to see that himself received no injury at his hands.' In this position he held him motionless on his back, until he had obtained from him a promise that no farther attempt should be made on his person.

"After this rencounter, Father Nerinckx quietly

remounted his horse and proceeded on his journey; Hardin as quietly moving off in the other direction. On arriving at the church, one of his friends asked Mr. Nerinckx, 'how it had happened that his stirrup leather had been cut?' He replied by simply stating the adventure in a few words, and observing, with a smile, 'that these young buckskins could not handle a Dutchman!' After this, he never was heard to speak of the affair; but Hardin was wont to say to his friends, 'he had often thought before, that he had handled men; but that he really never had hold of one before he met priest Nerinckx, who, he verily believed, had something supernatural about him.'"

This bodily strength, which enabled the priest to teach manners to the presumptuous youth, was also, about this time, displayed in a more public and religious, although as unostentatious a manner, at the blessing of the graveyard in Bullitt county. Father Nerinckx had finished the church of *St. John the Baptist*, in that county, and, having laid out a graveyard, resolved to bless it with more than ordinary ceremonies. He was passionately fond of the dead, and did all in his power to promote devotion for the souls in purgatory, among his people. Upon this particular occasion, he caused a large cedar cross, forty feet high, the very one which, to this day, yet graces that sacred spot, to be made; and, having taken off his shoes and stockings, he ordered all those who intended assisting at the

ceremony to do the same. He then shouldered the precious burden; and, aided by twelve men, barefooted like himself, who supported the lower portion of the cross and prevented it from dragging the ground, he carried it a long distance, praying in a loud voice during the whole time of this rather uncommon procession. Old Mr. Shepherd witnessed the solemn occurrence, during which many of the lookers-on were moved to tears at the sight of the pious priest carrying the cross like his Divine Master.

It was in the same place that the catholic priest taught some Kentucky youths a lesson, which subsequent events must have recalled forcibly to their minds in their old age. On the road to St. John's, they met a negro who politely bade the time of day to the company. Father Nerinckx took off his hat and returned the salutation with much courtesy. Upon his companions deriding his christian conduct, he made them this sensible and rather stinging reply: "I do not want to be beaten in politeness by a negro!"

Straightforward, and of a most generous disposition, Father Nerinckx despised those mere forms of worldly politeness which rather cripple than favor the true expression of the charitable feelings of a christian soul; his was the genuine politeness of the apostolic man: all to all, that he might win all to Christ. Unskilled in the use of the English language, unable to avail

himself of the nice distinctions of words and purity of diction, which, if not always salutary, often prove agreeable to less robust christians than those the earnest priest strove to form, he always dealt in plain matter of fact language. Learned in the sacred lorè of Scripture and of the holy Fathers, and possessed of a most solid judgment, he never indulged in fanciful flights of rhetorical eloquence, and, for that matter, freely acknowledged that he could not do it. His sermons were unpretentious catechetical instructions rendered in broken English, which made him a rather disagreeable speaker; but they were always listened to with great attention, and his words sank deeply into the hearts of his hearers.

Well does Archbishop Spalding remark:* "The whole experience of the church has proved that however valuable mere human eloquence may be, and however efficient for the conversion of men, it is still utterly powerless when unattended with a special grace in the preacher, which enables him to reach the *hearts* of his hearers. The history of the church in all ages has proved the truth of the Psalmist's declaration: 'Unless God build the house, in vain doth he labor who buildeth it.' 'Paul may plant; Apollo may water; but God giveth the increase.' Men of the least reputation for popular eloquence have often effected the greatest amount of good. Jealous of his glory being shared with

* "Sketches of Kentucky," pgg. 146, 147, and 199.

men, God often does the most by the feeblest instruments. And it is on this principle that twelve unlettered fishermen converted the world, confounding the philosophers, confuting the rhetoricians, and silencing the oracles of paganism.

"We would not be understood as intending, by this digression to disparage mere human learning or eloquence. Both are highly useful, and even, to some extent, necessary, especially in our *enlightened* (!) day. But we have meant to imply that mere human gifts, however great or useful, are only subordinate to gifts of a higher kind. Men are not to be converted merely 'by the persuasive words of human wisdom;' but by invoking the divine blessing through constant prayer, and by preaching, with simplicity, and in union with God, 'Christ, and Him crucified.' This did the good Mr. Nerinckx; and this is the true secret of his great and astonishing success in the holy ministry."

"Though he had something austere in his manner, and though he was a foreigner and spoke English very imperfectly, yet it is remarkable that he made, perhaps, more converts among protestants than any other missionary who ever labored in Kentucky, if we except Mr. Badin. So true it is that conversion is not ordinarily effected by human eloquence alone, or by any other mere human means, but by the grace and blessing of God, crowning with success the labors of the missionary. Mr. Nerinckx seldom made a missionary tour without receiv-

ing some one into the bosom of the Holy Catholic Church. In one of these excursions, he made no fewer than thirteen converts. And those whom he received into the church were well grounded in the faith, and generally proved steadfast."

No wonder that Father Badin was so unwilling to part with the humble, but most useful priest. It did not take Bishop Flaget long to value his labors as highly as did the Archbishop and the Vicar-general.

Father Nerinckx had gone to welcome the first Bishop of Bardstown in the name of the clergy and faithful of the new diocese, and met him and his suite in Louisville on the 4th of June, 1811. He escorted him through Bardstown, where there was as yet no church, to St. Stephen's, where they were received by the Vicar-general and clergy on the 11th, and were greeted by a large concourse of people, anxious to see their Bishop.* Only a month later, July 10, 1811, Father Nerinckx wrote to Archbishop Carroll† to thank him once more for his paternal solicitude, and to assure him that he desired to continue enjoying his good counsels, and he added: ". . . Our Right Reverend Bishop has arrived safe, with a pious, zealous, and select suite. He is a man, I think, according to the heart of God, who will, beyond a doubt, put all things to rights and strengthen the good ef-

*Cfr. Life of Bishop Flaget, by Archbishop Spalding, pg. 71, 72.
†Baltimore MSS.

fected. . . . Till now, my fate is uncertain, and I do not know what to do. I see the urgent necessity of doing rigid penance, and of improving my intellect, if I continue in the ministry; but I fear very much that I will be prevented from doing so, the new Bishop being unwilling to consent to my departure, because of the extreme penury of priests. May God dispose of me according to his exceeding great mercy! . . ."

Bishop Flaget would not hear of his going; and, in obedience to the wishes of his Ordinary, Father Nerinckx now gave up all idea of leaving Kentucky. From St. Stephen's—the present Loretto—where he resided with the Bishop, Messrs. Badin, David, and a few seminarians till 1812, he continued to attend, as of old, to his numerous stations; whilst his sound and deep theological learning was much prized in the conferences which were held from time to time by the Bishop, for the instruction of the students, and the uniformity of ministerial practice on the missions. Father Badin thus describes the *palace* which was at that time their common home, and the cradle of catholicity in Kentucky:

"Mr. Badin had for his own lodging but one poor log house; and in consequence of the expenses he had lately incurred in building a house for a monastery, which was burned down ere it had been completed, it was with great difficulty that he was enabled to build and prepare, for the residence of his illustrious friend

and the ecclesiastics who accompanied him, two miserable log cabins, sixteen feet square. One of the missionaries was compelled to sleep on a mattress in the garret of this strange episcopal palace, which was whitewashed with lime, and contained no other furniture than a bed, six chairs, two tables, and a few planks for a library. Here the Bishop resided for a year, esteeming himself happy to live thus in the midst of apostolical poverty." *

* Statement of the Missions of Kentucky, by Father Badin, Paris, 1822; translated in the U. S. Catholic Miscellany, December 1, 1824.

CHAPTER XIV.

1812.

NEW EFFORTS IN BEHALF OF EDUCATION.—THE LITTLE SCHOOL ON HARDIN'S CREEK.—ITS FIRST TEACHERS.—THEY RETIRE FROM THE WORLD.—THEY START A RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY.—ELECTION OF THE FIRST SUPERIOR.—A PRIMARY BOARDING SCHOOL.—FATHER NERINCKX FOUNDS THE LORETTO SOCIETY.

As we have seen, Father Nerinckx had already determined, in 1807, upon the main objects of the religious community which he was striving to bring into existence for the instruction of female youth. The daily increase of catholics in Kentucky made him realize more and more the necessity of providing their children with the solid food of a catholic education, without which the churches he had built would be void of worshipers so soon as immigration ceased. After having for years recommended the enterprise to the pious prayers of priests and religious communities at home and abroad, and patiently awaited God's own time for the realization of his fondest hopes, he was finally rewarded with the faintest glimmer of success. He welcomed it all the more eagerly, from the fact that it looked more like a forlorn hope.

Had not a lonely star in the far East, the shimmering rays of which dispelled the darkness of ignorance in but three intellects, been the sign of the world's redemption?

Mr. James Dent, the same who, in 1807, had offered four hundred acres of land for the erection of a school-building, having gone on a visit to Maryland, returned to Kentucky in the beginning of 1812, accompanied by Miss *Mary Rhodes*, his cousin. She stayed a few weeks at his house, where her sister, Miss Nancy Rhodes, was living; she then went to live with her brother, Bennet Rhodes, on Hardin's Creek, Washington county, near St. Charles' church.* Having been educated in a convent, Miss Rhodes took pleasure in consecrating a few hours every day to the instruction of her nieces, who were denied the advantages of catholic education, which she herself had enjoyed in her Maryland home. Pleased with her first efforts, she soon desired to enlarge the field of her usefulness, and applied to Father Nerinckx for leave to impart religious instruction and the first rudiments of elementary education to the little girls of the neighborhood.

Father Nerinckx gladly granted the generous request, and the school was started in a poor, dilapidated cabin, the abandoned residence of a

*The historical details of this and other chapters about Loretto are obtained from the records of the Loretto convent, and reminiscences of the older members of the community, who were personally acquainted with the parties concerned.

former tenant. It was situated on a little eminence near Hardin's Creek, about half a mile from Mr. Rhodes' residence, on the opposite side of the creek, and half way between the latter's house and St. Charles church. This wretched hut had no floor but the bare ground, and rough boards formed an equally poor roof, through which rain and snow poured freely down on its humble inmates. How like unto the stable of Bethlehem! Was it astonishing, if heaven looked favorably upon such humble beginnings, and blessed the disinterested generosity of the self-sacrificing teacher?

The school succeeded beyond the most sanguine expectations of both pastor and teacher. The number of children steadily increased, and, during one of his visits, Father Nerinckx, who watched the new undertaking with the anxious care of a mother, offered to Miss Rhodes, as an assistant teacher well qualified for the work, Miss *Christina Stuart*, a pious young lady of the neighborhood, whose acquaintance Miss Rhodes had studiously cultivated. The offer was eagerly accepted, and a desire of mutual edification led the two young ladies to board together at Mr. Rhodes' house.

But "the spirit breatheth where it listeth," and "they heard its voice, not knowing whence it cometh or whither it goeth." A desire of greater perfection soon led them to retire from the distractions which the social manners of the

Dent family necessarily entailed. Of a kindly disposition and in comfortable circumstances, Mr. Dent took pleasure in entertaining his friends. The good breeding and many accomplishments of the young ladies made his home a center of attraction for the neighboring settlers, many of whom deeply felt, in their new and comparativety desert home, the want of social amusements which the more advanced state of society in Maryland had made them look upon as a necessity. This constant drain upon the time and courtesy of the young ladies, necessarily interfered with their self-imposed duties as teachers. It brought them seriously to entertain the idea of isolating themselves from their relations and worldly acquaintances; to give more time to study and devotional exercises. Being piously inclined, they disliked to associate day after day with such gay company. A community of views soon ripened into a fixed purpose of retiring to the miserable little cabin adjoining the one used for school purposes, and just as wretched, and to trust to a kind Providence for the necessities of life, which, they hoped, the little remuneration from their scholars would enable them to procure. The plan was shortly afterward submitted to Father Nerinckx for his approbation; and he, seeing in it the work of Divine Providence, who was taking His own way to further his hidden purpose, warmly congratulated the young ladies upon

their noble determination, and encouraged them in their pious undertaking.

That such a course was loudly decried by their friends need hardly be told; "foolish whim," and "crazy notion," were mild terms by which to characterize such unworldly conduct; but they were as unheeded as they were harmless. The young ladies went; and God soon rewarded the pious confidence of his servants by sending them a new companion. Miss *Nancy Havern* came to claim the happiness of sharing their privations and labors, and she was received with open arms.

Up to this time, these pious souls had given little thought to the future, and they would hardly have dared to dream of what they were now soon to carry into effect. But with the advent of their new-found friend, another light dawned upon them: might they not become *nuns*? And, between the hope and the fear which alternately swayed their hearts after this sudden revelation, they knew not whether to accuse themselves of presumption or to hail the thought with unrestrained delight. Application was again made to the one whom they began to look upon in the light of a spiritual father and especial adviser, and his answer made their hearts throb with joy. It was not yet the accomplishment of their wishes, but it was an implied possibility of their being fulfilled. "He was happy to see so much piety, so much good will, so much generosity, in the cause of religion. He readily encouraged them, enlightened them by his

prudent advice, told them that it would be holy and useful if they could but effect so great an undertaking, and he would rejoice with them if this humble attempt should succeed according to their wishes. But he also candidly stated to them that they would most assuredly meet with many difficulties and hardships; they would have to suffer real and extreme poverty in this new settlement, and their inexperience in the customs of religious life would be the source of many a wearisome temptation. Like docile children, they listened with reverent attention to all he said to them; but, so far from being discouraged at the foretold difficulties and trials, they begged most earnestly to be allowed to begin at once. They entreated Father Nerinckx to give them some rules to go by, and to write down the devotions they should practice during the day. Pleased with their spirit of self-sacrifice, the pious priest wrote down on a slip of paper a few directions for their mode of life, and allowed them to try it for some days."*

Father Nerinckx at once acquainted the Bishop with the step that had been taken by his *protégées*, and the zealous prelate gave his full approbation to the work. He requested Father Nerinckx to take them under his special guidance, and assured him that whatever subsequent step he might, in his wisdom, see fit to take, he would most heartily indorse it. A few days later, on his return from St. Stephen's to St.

* Personal recollections of one of the young ladies.

Charles' church, Father Nerinckx went, as was his custom, to see how things were going on, and finding that the pious young ladies were delighted with their new mode of life, he communicated to them the welcome intelligence of Bishop Flaget's approval of the undertaking, and left them a few rules to be observed each day of the week. They were unable to restrain the joyous emotion of their hearts, and they entreated Father Nerinckx to appoint a superior who should guide them in their devotions and direct more efficiently their little household concerns. With his usual prudence and discretion, he advised them to first make an experiment, and good-humoredly told them to fix it this time to their own liking. Miss Mary Rhodes being the one who had commenced the little school, and having been educated in a convent in Maryland, was selected as best able to guide them and manage things to their satisfaction. He promised, however, that so soon as they would be five or six in number, he would allow them to proceed to a regular election, provided the success of the school warranted the expenses which the sustenance of such a number would necessarily entail upon them, notwithstanding their poor and comparatively inexpensive life. They had not long to wait.

Miss *Nellie Morgan*, an acquaintance of theirs, was teaching a small number of children in the neighborhood of Holy Mary's church. Being the only child of a widowed mother, she used to

teach in her house; and, whenever practicable, would avail herself of a holiday to go and visit her friends. Having considerable experience as a teacher, she took great interest in their venture, and, on her return home, could not help rejoicing with Miss *Nancy Rhodes* over the good success of her sister and companions. Their interest in the welfare of the new institution soon ripened into a desire to contribute personally to its success, and with the permission of Father Nerinckx they joined the fortunate three. Miss Morgan's buoyancy of character and pleasant demeanor was a much desired quality in a community, where extreme poverty made it at times difficult to be cheerful and without apprehension for the future. She was, moreover, very much liked as a teacher; was easy, fluent, and interesting in conversation. Although without what we call a brilliant education, she had a ready capacity for getting children interested, and imparting to them without effort, and in a pleasing way, the rudimentary knowledge which so many possess without being able to communicate it to others. She ever maintained good order among the children, and had such winning ways as to be their idol. No wonder if such an acquisition was welcomed by the community, especially so when they learned that Nancy Rhodes, a young lady of solid virtue, and a sister to the foundress, accompanied her. Above all, they were now five in number, and the longed-for time to become nuns had arrived.

They applied without delay to Father Nerinckx for the appointment of a superior, whom they should look to as a *mother*, and he told them to go to their cabin and consult among themselves. The deliberations did not last long. In their holy simplicity "they sat down like children on the dirt floor," and the oldest voting first, they all agreed upon Nancy Rhodes, and immediately returned to the Director to inform him of their choice. He remarked: "You have chosen the youngest one among you;" but they replied unanimously: "If she is the youngest, she is also the most virtuous."

Miss Nancy Rhodes, now first Superior, bought the small tract of land, on which the cabins were built, for $75, and gave her negro, who was sold for $450. Under Father Nerinckx' energetic management of affairs, the sisters immediately set to work making the necessary improvements for the accommodation of their increasing number. They replaced and arranged the boards on the roof as well as they could, put boards across the upper beams or joists, forming a small attic, which they used as dormitory; and they fixed up another part of the cabin for a kitchen, which was also their refectory. One table was made of some boards nailed to a stump which had been left standing in the middle of the cabin by the former tenants, probably for a similar use; this was the sisters' table. Another, for the pupils, consisted of a long slab, or more properly a puncheon with

two tough legs under each end of it. They then inclosed a little yard around the buildings, and erected in it a small fabric, somewhat like a pen, covered with old boards, that served for a meat-house, and a similar one for a hen-house Scarcely had these improvements been made, when a sixth young lady, Miss *Sally Havern*, a sister to Nancy Havern, of Madison county, came to share their labors. This additional help was most opportune. People of Holy Mary's congregation, desirous of having their children share in the benefits of the catholic education imparted to those of St. Charles, now applied to the sisters to have them received as boarders among them. Having obtained a favorable reply, they sent the good news to friends at a greater distance, who hastened to forward their girls to enjoy the same privilege. The slab table did very well for their meals; but where were they to sleep? "Their beds were to go on the *high shelf*, as we sometimes called it. At night, they were spread on the floor; and in the morning were placed one on top of the other in the most convenient part of the room, and they remained so till night."*

The new teachers were very happy in the midst of all their poverty. Whenever their pious founder would come to visit them, they clustered around him for lessons and information concerning the duties of their new state of life. He sometimes gave them regular instructions,

* Personal recollections of one of them.

but oftener conversed with them, answering their numerous inquiries. Viewing the infancy of his little community, and the inexperience of its members in religious life, he one day remarked to the young ladies, that it might facilitate their pious object, if he invited some nuns from Europe to teach and train them in the duties of a conventual life. To this they all frankly objected, saying they preferred to be instructed and guided by him. Upon mature reflection, considering that, left to themselves, they would be apt to agree better, and to suffer more cheerfully the many trials in store for them, he yielded the point. Before deciding any thing further, however, Father Nerinckx, always diffident of himself and desirous of being guided only by the holy will of God, the expression of which he always found in the wishes of his superiors, consulted Bishop Flaget. The Prelate approved of it all, and insisted upon his shaping and framing the new foundation without any foreign element, according to his own thoughts of what the Institute should be.

Father Nerinckx now called his little community together. Upon their expressing anew their ardent wish of organizing themselves into a religious congregation, he proceeded to unfold to them the plan which, during six years, he had fostered in his heart, and which was now reaching its happy, though humble realization. He imparted to them the Bishop's full approval of their desires, adding that they might now

consider themselves *Postulants*, preparing, by their own free choice, to become nuns of their own new order. He exhorted them to have great confidence in Providence, *who never forsakes those who piously trust in Him*, and stated that as Religious they should have for their characteristic name: THE FRIENDS OF MARY AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS. He then read to them the following instructions:

In their silent hours, in their labors and their devotions, the members of the community shall try to keep their minds in a state of contemplation on the sufferings of Jesus, and the sorrows of Mary, His Blessed Mother. The grand object of the Society will be "the glory of God, the sanctification of their own souls, and the salvation of their neighbors, by educating and instructing females." These three intentions are to be, in all cases, the leading motives in all their labors, teachings, mortifications, and meritorious works. They shall call each other *Sister*, and by name. A religious dress or uniform shall be adopted, and its colors, form, and quality determined upon; for the present, owing to their poverty, the sisters can only wear whatever dresses they already have. Silence shall be kept all day, except during the recreation following the three meals, and prayers shall be said in common at fixed times during the day. He also exhorted them to great vigilance in the tuition and government of their pupils, a great zeal in teaching them their prayers and cate-

chism, and a motherly care in forming their manners and morals. Every evening the children were to walk in procession to St. Charles' graveyard, distant from their cabins about a quarter of a mile, there to pray for the dead; on the way thither prayers were recited aloud by teachers and pupils for the relief of the souls in purgatory, and the return walk was a most healthy bodily exercise and amusing recreation. Sacred canticles and hymns were to be taught to the children as a most interesting diversion of mind, and Miss Nellie Morgan having been for years an assiduous frequenter of singing schools, and a member of the church choir, soon succeeded in making these exercises both agreeable and instructive.

The children soon learned to like the well regulated life of this beggarly little paradise; the sisters made rapid strides in the science of the saints. Nothing would have been wanting to their happiness, had Father Nerinckx been living somewhere near them, where they could hear Mass daily, and enjoy more frequently the benefits of his priestly ministrations.

CHAPTER XV.

1812–1813.

Churches of the Long Lick and Casey Creek.—Father Nerinckx removes to St. Charles.—First taking of the veil at Loretto.—Black dye and chemical experiments.—First regular election of a Dear Mother.—First rules and their author.—Building a new convent and residence.

Up to this time, Father Nerinckx had been living with the Bishop and Father Badin at St. Stephen's, whence he regularly attended his many missionary stations, and superintended the erection of new ones. In 1812, he built *St. Anthony's*, on the Long Lick, Breckinridge county; the same year, he began the erection of *St. Bernard's* church on Casey creek. The first catholic settler of Casey county was John Wethington, senior, who came to Kentucky from Maryland in 1798. He first located on Cartwright's Creek, near St. Ann's church. In 1802, he, with four families in addition to his own, named respectively Wheatly, Miles, Clements, and Speaker, moved to Casey county, of which they were the first catholic settlers.

In going back and forth to St. Charles, Father Nerinckx never failed to visit the school, in-

structing and questioning the children, encouraging the teachers, or giving them such directions as circumstances suggested. But as the work was growing in his hands, and assuming an importance which his own estimate of its usefulness did not allow him to underrate, he now fully realized the necessity of living nearer to the school and residence of the sisters, whose spiritual training and progress in religious perfection the Bishop had intrusted to his vigilance and care. He therefore, with the consent of Monseigneur Flaget, removed to St. Charles, and took up his residence in the vestry room, built in the rear of the church. Father Nerinckx lived there for several months, nearly half a mile away from the school and from the nearest neighbor. The crosses which adorned the last earthly homes of the dead, were the only objects which recalled the living in his voluntary seclusion. None disturbed his solitude, save a poor old neighboring woman, who, taking her delight in serving the minister of God, as Martha served our Lord, prepared his meals in her own cottage, and carried them over to him whenever he was at home.

The school being of more easy access than the church, to the few who were able to assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on week-days, Father Nerinckx gave the necessary directions to the sisters for fitting up the best of their apartments as a temporary chapel. He himself erected in it a suitable altar for the celebration

of the holy mysteries, and adorned it with a fine statue of the Blessed Virgin which he had brought over from Belgium, and had kept in his room at St. Stephen's ever since. When not abroad on the mission, he frequently, during the week, walked over, from his lonely residence at St. Charles, in the early morning, and said Mass in the poor little cabin, to the great joy of its inmates.

All these doings necessarily awakened the interest of the public in the new establishment. In order to satisfy the curiosity of the people, as well as to prevent unnecessary excitement, and forego idle comments, Father Nerinckx announced to his congregation the fact of the foundation of a convent in their midst, taking care to explain to them its objects, and the good which was to result from it to the country at large. This he did a short time previous to the day appointed for the taking of the veil by the three first postulants—Mary Rhodes, Christina Stuart, and Nancy Havern.

On the festival day, April 25, 1812, a numerous crowd assembled at St. Charles to witness this to them new ceremony, the first of the kind ever performed in the Western country. Preceded by the children, and surrounded by their companions, the three postulants walked in procession from the school to the church. There, at the foot of the altar, they made before Father Nerinckx, and in the presence of the whole congregation, their solemn promise to renounce the

world and its maxims, and to persevere in the choice of life they had made. A uniform veil of such material as could be had at the time, of size and form like the one used ever since, was ready at hand; and Father Nerinckx, having blessed it with the prayers of the church, spread it over the head of each of the postulants. It hung loosely over the shoulders, was of very poor material, and of black color. The ceremony, and Mass which followed, being over, Sisters Mary, Christina, and Nancy, with their companions and pupils, returned in silence to their quiet little cabin home.

On the same same day, the two aspirants, Misses Ann Rhodes and Sallie Havern, were, with the permission of Father Nerinckx and the consent of the new novices, admitted as postulants. Miss Nellie Morgan, who, although received, had been unable to dismiss her school until the term would be up, was ready by the 29th of June following.

With what loving care did not these pious souls set about providing for the religious uniform which extreme poverty prevented them from assuming on this blessed day! Forced to wear the colored garments which they made use of in the world, they went immediately to work devising means to procure a dye which might yield the requisite black color prescribed by the rule. Poverty is so ingenious when assisted by a true love of God; misery so inventive in a good cause when spurred on by an indomitable

will to a desired end! A first attempt with oak bark stripped from trees of the adjoining woods, was very unsatisfactory; a rusty red-brown gives any thing but an attractive look to the garments, let alone the desirability of a grave color for the apparel of nuns. The addition of copperas to the extract of oak bark proved more creditable to their skill in the dyers' art, and made a jet black, if it did not prove a durable coloring mixture. The homespun goods for habits and veils likely went through the blackening process oftener than the poor sisters cared to tell to the new-comers, but they were according to rule, and the holy souls were happy.

Anxious to have a regularly constituted conventual home, and the two postulants having expressed a wish to be more intimately associated with their sisters, they soon begged of Father Nerinckx to give the veil to Ann Rhodes and Sarah Havern, and admit Ellen Morgan as a postulant. The request was acceded to, and the public announcement of a ceremony similar to the first one again brought to St. Charles church a large number of curious spectators, all the more eager to witness the edifying spectacle from the fact that the young ladies had lived so long in their midst. Sisters Ann and Sarah received the veil from the hands of their spiritual director, on the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, June 29, 1812; and Miss Morgan, admitted as a postulant the same day, subsequently became a novice on August 12th of the same year, being

named after the Saint whose feast the church celebrates on that day, Sister Clare.

On the very day of the ceremony, June 29th, Father Nerinckx paid the fervent novices an official visit in their happy solitude, and, as Spiritual Director representing the Bishop, called on them for the regular election of a Superior. This time, he himself presided, and a unanimous vote having been cast for Sister Ann Rhodes, he then and there constituted her Superior of the Novices and of the Society of the Friends of Mary at the Foot of the Cross, under the title of *Dear Mother*. He also gave them a copy of the following short rules to be observed in community life, which are so simple and withal so thoroughly imbued with his spirit, that we can not refrain from inserting them here. The reader will pardon us all the more readily for giving them entire, as they constitute the essence and foundation of the subsequently approved rule of the Loretto Society:

"WHEREAS, the ever Blessed Virgin Mary is the Universal and Heavenly Mother of this society, the members thereof are called *Sisters*. The Superior of the whole society goes by the name of *Dear Mother* (or Mother Superior); the Superior of each house shall be styled Mother N——.

"The dress must be black and full every way, having nothing of a novel or fashionable appearance. The head-dress will be a black veil, suf-

ficiently large to hide the shape; a simple bonnet is allowed when abroad or in the rain. The sisters wear a leathern girdle, which, with the scapular, must be blessed on the day of taking the habit. A cloak or choir-cape is allowable for Winter use when in the chapel, and elsewhere, if necessary, but with the leave of the Superior. Straw beds to sleep on, with becoming covers.

"*Meals.*—The refection will be according to the means of the house, within the bounds of poverty, and free from all that flatters sensuality, or mere appetite; the sisters being mindful that a pampered body is one of the greatest enemies of spiritual life.

"*Fasts.*—No fasting days besides the general ones of the whole Church, except the Friday of the Seven Sorrows, in Passion Week, and Good Friday, when the sisters will fast on bread and water.

"*Vigils.*—Every Thursday night will be a vigil, during which every one has to adore the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, for one hour. It begins, after night prayers, with the song, *Jesus, the only thought*, etc., and ends with the prayers of the next morning.

"*Silence.*—Silence is kept all day, and every day of the week, except during the hour of recreation from after dinner till half-past one. No recreation in Lent, and more complete silence in Holy Week, and in the octave before the Assumption; also, on every fasting day of obliga-

tion during the year, and on days of abstinence. On those days, catechism instead of recreation, so as to leave none not fully informed of religious and holy science.

"Although the sisters are to love silence and retirement, still their countenance and deportment ought to be modestly cheerful and becomingly affable when circumstances require, so that their retirement and silence, speech, countenance, and behavior may be equally edifying without any mixture of worldly levity. They will be taught the rules of religious politeness, and they are to be strict in keeping them among themselves, as well as before strangers. When they meet, they should salute each other by a slight inclination of the head, considering in the person of one another the quality of a Friend of Mary, and greeting at the same time their Angel Guardian, and in the person of their Superior, Jesus and Mary."

Nor was the holy man satisfied with prescribing rules to others; he was the first one to practice them. His mortified life made a lasting impression even on children, as appears from the following account given of him by an eyewitness, at the time, a fourteen year old school girl at Loretto: "Father Nerinckx' clothing was of the poorest kind, made of coarse homespun wool or cotton. His diet also was very scant and poor; indeed, he lived a most austere and mortified life. He was most vigilant in his endeavors to cultivate and form the minds and hearts of

the sisters, who were as yet inexperienced and unacquainted with a life of seclusion from the world. This he did by his instructions, directions, admonitions, and corrections. His words were few, earnest, and to the purpose, and ever sank deep into the hearts of his hearers. Oftentimes have I heard the sisters say, at the close of his instructions, that they felt a new courage and zeal to brave every obstacle in their hard and laborious life, and to do all in their power to become worthy Friends of Mary at the Foot of the Cross. Much more could be said of our dear and cherished Father and Founder, but I must leave it to some one more capable of discharging this pleasant duty."

Father Nerinckx now called upon St. Charles congregation for assistance in the good work. It had become, not only advisable, but strictly necessary, to erect more suitable buildings. Untiring in his efforts for the temporal as well as for the spiritual welfare of his little community, which was in the most destitute circumstances, he started a subscription that realized a few hundred dollars, mostly in trade, and he requested those who could do no better, to assist in getting out logs for the erection of a new convent. On that same memorable day, June 29, 1812, the first log was cut; and notwithstanding the greatest difficulties and hardships, the common share of every pious undertaking, the work progressed most satisfactorily. The trees around the two little cabins were felled and hewed for

house-logs, thus, at the same time, clearing the ground on which the two rows of buildings were to be erected, and leaving between them an extensive square yard. The sisters themselves subsequently cleared this yard of stumps by chipping them away, and burning them down into the ground. Father Nerinckx made the plan of the buildings, and staked out the place where each one was to be erected.* Nor did he spare his strength. Many a log which the united efforts of three men could not move, was lifted by his powerful arms and thrown out of the way. He labored with his own hands, and put his shoulder to the timbers when they were raised up. The foundation timbers or sills having been placed in position, stone, hauled from Hardin's Creek, was built up under them as support or underpinning, and afterward the crevices were filled in with mud and straw. Through reverence for the One who was to dwell therein, the logs intended for the wall of the chapel and house connected with it were hewed. The different buildings were erected at a small distance from each other, forming two rows of houses on two opposite sides of the square yard. The first

*Our readers will excuse this lengthy and detailed account of the building. Every circumstance of its erection is lovingly treasured in the memory of the Missionary's spiritual children, and it is of interest to catholics because relating to the foundation of the *first convent in the West.* Whilst in Europe, in 1816, Father Nerinckx had a print of the new establishment engraved. We regret our inability to reproduce this very rare and interesting relic of Kentucky's early hisory.

house to the right of the entrance to the yard was the school, and the one opposite in the left-hand row of houses was Father Nerinckx' dwelling. Like the school, it was a double cabin of one story with its wooden chimney outside; the space between the rooms formed a little entry protected by weather-boarding. He built most of his own dwelling-house himself; and the entire work done on it by others, only cost him six dollars and fifty cents!

His kitchen, the second building in the left-hand row, being smaller, was soon finished; and his old cook, who was living in the neighborhood, came to take possession of it, continuing to carry the priest's meals to St. Charles sacristy, where he was still living. The poor woman also made herself very useful to the sisters, carrying their messages, and doing their errands to the neighbors, when necessary. Whenever home, Father Nerinckx came over and assisted at the building, lifting and raising logs, preparing mortar, and plastering the walls in the very primitive fashion of the day, viz., filling up the empty spaces between the logs with handfuls of clay mortar, which displayed for years afterward the imprint of his fingers. Having finished his own house, he left his sacristy residence at St. Charles, and moved to Loretto. One room of this house served him for sitting-room, study, bedroom, and refectory; the other one being reserved for the accommodation of the Bishop or of any priest who might visit him.

This was the unpretending palace of Father Nerinckx, whom popular instinct, which is scarcely ever at fault, spoke of as "the saintly priest," and it was his home for the last twelve years of his life.

The building next to the school, on the right-hand side of the entrance to the grounds, was the church and convent. It was two stories high, and consisted of two square cabins with upper rooms; the space between the cabins was weather-boarded in, and it thus formed a rather neat looking chapel. When finished, it was blessed, and received the name of *Little Loretto*, in honor of Our Lady of Loretto, in Italy, for whom Father Nerinckx had a most tender devotion. The two rooms at the sides of the chapel were intended for the use of the community, but they were not finished till about two years later.

The school-house was soon occupied by the boarders and day-scholars. A similar double cabin built next to the convent was used for kitchen and refectory, and the church not being completed at the time, the same room was also used for dormitory, and the second one fitted up as an oratory. The altar and statue of the Blessed Virgin were transferred to it, and Mass was said in it by the Director, whenever home from missionary duty. Thither also sisters and children repaired for their daily devotions. The building fronting this one in the left-hand row, and like it in all respects, was reserved for work-

room, and was used, as necessity required, for guests' room, and for infirmary.

Father Nerinckx now inclosed the buildings and yard with a rail fence, thus dividing them from the garden that extended to the summit of the hill, the opposite portion of which stretched to the brink of the creek, and its declivity was utilized as an orchard, which the holy priest set out with his own hands. The large square yard he leveled down, and sowed in blue grass, thus giving a neat and pleasant appearance to the whole. Finally, at the outer side of the church, he paled in a small plat of ground which was to serve as a graveyard for the sisters, and in the middle of it he planted a large square cross surrounded by an evergreen arbor and with shrubs, trees, and flowers. He now tore down the two old cabins, and with the serviceable lumber built a small double cabin at the further end of the yard, which was used for meat-house; later, it became the home of an old Mr. Gates, of whom we shall have occasion to speak hereafter.

CHAPTER XVI.

1812–1813.

Bishop Flaget visits Loretto.—New difficulties.—Death of Mother Ann Rhodes.—Her burial: self-denial in death.—Father Nerinckx' tribute to her memory.—Dear Mother Mary Rhodes.—Practicing holy poverty.—Fortunate "old maids!"

In the midst of all these occupations, Father Nerinckx felt more and more keenly the want of money, which he could have used to such great advantage for the establishment and improvement of Loretto, and the erection of churches in the new missions that he had visited for the first time in 1810. Owing to the troubled condition of affairs in Europe, funds reached him but very rarely, and in such small sums, that he resolved to undertake the then dangerous journey to the old country, in order to procure the means for completing the works begun. He therefore applied to Right Rev. Bishop Flaget for the necessary permission. Having but eight priests to attend to the spiritual wants of the people in his extensive diocese, and Father Nerinckx' district embracing nearly half of the State, the Bishop saw no possible way of supplying the place of

the courageous missionary. He might possibly have attended to those missions himself, but he had but just moved to St. Thomas, and was on the eve of undertaking a journey to Baltimore, on business connected with the missions of Kentucky. He accordingly induced Father Nerinckx to defer his departure for two or three years. Desiring, however, before leaving for the East, to testify his esteem for the self-sacrificing priest, and his appreciation of his labors, and in order to encourage the good Sisters of Loretto, he visited St. Charles and the convent on the 8th of September, 1812, returned to St. Thomas the same evening, and started the next day on horseback for Baltimore, accompanied by Rev. Mr. Chabrat.

No sooner was the Bishop gone, than the devil, trying as of old to thwart, by every available means, a work which was to prove the source of so much good to religion, excited some of the priest's old enemies to circulate all kinds of evil reports and damaging rumors. Father Nerinckx had, the year before, published a prospectus, setting forth the inducements offered to catholics to settle in what he called the *New Tract*, and the advantages that would accrue to them by a change of residence; and he had collected some money on the strength of it, to begin the erection of the necessary churches. This plan his adversaries decried bitterly, and tried to prejudice the minds of the people against Loretto, and so cut off all hope of further help.

They accused the priest so persistently of having used the money for other purposes than the ones it had been pledged for, that Father Nerinckx felt it to be his duty, in self-defense, to issue the following printed circular:*

"TO ALL CATHOLICS OR OTHERS TO WHOM IT MAY BELONG. (*Sic.*)

"Proofs are extant, and repeated accounts have been given of the employment of the offerings made by the well-wishers for the success of my undertaking, for the benefit of religion, for the improvement of the thinly inhabited counties, and for the spiritual and temporal good of the several catholics, who have already moved, or others that are to move hereafter, to those parts that are mentioned in my once circulating *Prospectus.* An unfavorable rumor, spread through malice, ignorance, or avarice, that the subscription had failed, did reduce the subscription from the start to a very insignificant assistance, compared, I do not say only with the project, but with what has really been done and complied with, by erecting churches and making other provisions of that nature, according to the literal expressions of the *Prospectus.* Casey's Creek,. Clifty, Hardinsburg, Union, etc., are extant evidences of my assertion. A nunnery and

* We reprint this document just as it came from the press in 1812, without changing either expressions or construction, from a copy now in possession of the Loretto Mother-house. It is not stated where it was printed, and a mistake in the name of Father Nerinckx (ks) is corrected by his own hand.

a school were projects still unfulfilled, I agree, but I hope not through my neglect. I protest that my sincere wish is now, as it was at that time, to move myself, however ill-qualified a subject, to the appointed places, and there, to the best in my power, to endeàvor to fulfill to a jot my promises, notwithstanding the failure of the main bulk of the subscribers. In the meantime, Providence, whose ways are oftentimes different from the speculations of men, seems to have unexpectedly manifested a design of ordering the very object of a nunnery and school, to be erected under our eyes in our present neighborhood. The fact is, a long desired institute for the education of the female youth is begun by the lately established *Little Society of the Friends of Mary, under the Cross of Jesus*, in the congregation of St. Charles (Hardin's Creek), at their place called Loretto. The school is forming fast of every denomination. The scholars are instructed by two sisters of the society, and rules are strictly observed. We will not trouble our readers with praises of the establishment; the testimonies of the scholars, the approbation of parents and thinking judges of other denominations, as well as of catholics, besides the eagerness and the number of those who wait for the moment of their reception, are unexceptionable commendations. Reading, writing, needle-work, etc., sound morality and christian politeness, make up the sum of instruction received from the society. Aiming, and sincerely wish-

ing to be useful to all, without any self-seeking, the terms are uncommonly low, to wit: $5.00 a year for schooling, of which one in cash; internes or boarders are moreover to find themselves—that is, to provide for bedding, washing, victuals, etc. None to be admitted for less than three months. No distinction is made of religious denominations, if willing to submit to the rules of the school. Needy orphans, as much as possible, will be admitted gratis. One may even become a member of the society gratis, if sufficiently qualified for it. The same society will become, besides, an asylum or shelter for old age, decrepit and useless slaves, and whatever kind of sick or distressed fellow-creatures may call for their assistance, as far as their poor condition will permit. The work being begun on a small spot lately bought by the sisters, where housing is not only bad but entirely insufficient, and, as it is situated in a congregation under my care, I am, by the requisition of the Right Reverend Bishop, willing to assist in fixing for the temporal wants of buildings, etc. I trust the neighboring congregations will not be indifferent in the present need of the just-rising society and school, which can not fail to repay with an accumulated interest the small expenses and labor that are required at present for building a roomy and sufficient house, with some other necessaries. I myself, besides my pains and very remarkable hardships, do sacrifice $400 cash to carry on this so necessary work

for the religious and public good. I hope I will find some generous followers in the several surrounding congregations; and I trust that the old subscription will cheerfully be complied with, while the new one will be favorably received. For all must feel eagerly desirous to help us, in this important business, undertaken for their great interest, without any the least of our own. *Mr. Vincent Gates* has been requested to take the names of the subscribers and well-wishers.

"C. NERINCKX.

"*Dated the 2d day of October*, 1812.

"P. S. I wish to complete the big house and to have it ready for dwelling about next Christmas, if the subscription succeed.

"There are already thirty or forty scholars, and if the housing was sufficient, fully the double of this number would daily frequent the school."

People eagerly responded to the inelegantly worded, but truthful and matter-of-fact call of the persecuted priest, and, on a copy of the document now in possession of the Loretto Motherhouse, we find the following names, with amounts of subscription varying from two bushels of corn to three of wheat, and from seven dollars in trade to a hundred weight of pork:*

William Mattingly, John Wheatly, Joseph Simpson, Mary Ann Montgomery, Aquilla Blanford, Ignatius O'Bryan, John Willett, John

* We notice only one subscription of $2 in money.

Simms, Joseph O'Robey, Frances Sims, Joseph Knott, Nicholas Beaven, Alethey Gibbs, Susanna Rudd, Thomas Hayden, Steven Yates, Barnaby Mattingly, Charles Hardasty, Henry Boon, Mary Boon, Robert Ryney, Alexander Hamilton, Walter Hamilton, John B. Tomson, John A. Montgomery, Margaret Montgomery, James Simpson.

Encouraged by this scanty but hearty help of his people, the poor priest continued the work with unabated energy, and, in less than two years, completed the buildings described in the preceding chapter. Francis Melton, of Washington county, built "three double cabins of the monastery each of two pens, of sixteen feet in the clear, with a passage between of eight feet, to be finished and workmanly completed before the end of July, 1813." The timber being scarce on the small lot of the sisters, it had "to be taken as much as possible from General Walton's and other willing neighbors' land." This agreement, concluded on the 5th day of February, 1813, stipulated that Charles Nerinckx should pay for the work "sixty dollars in cash, and sixty dollars in trade, rated at the common trade price, the goods to be delivered, beginning March 1st, at Mr. Charles Hayden's, on Pottinger's Creek." *

But whilst the struggling institution seemed in some degree blessed with material prosperity,

*MS. contract written by Rev. Nerinckx, in the Loretto archives.

God, in his all-wise Providence, saw fit to try the sisters and purify them by affliction, that they might look up to Him only for help, and sever themselves more and more from all earthly affections. In the glowing crucible only does gold lose its dross, and it comes out of it in all the pure brightness of its unalloyed nature. During the Summer of 1812, the health of Dear Mother Ann Rhodes rapidly declined. She had been suffering from consumption for years, and as the fatal disease seemed to gather additional strength from the comfortless position of its willing victim, the devoted sisters bestowed on their Dear Mother all the fond cares and soothing attentions which religious affection alone knows how to dispense. From the white-curtained bed in one of the two old cabins, where the Superior was patiently suffering, she directed her little community with, if possible, more care and attention than ever. When the absence of the Father deprived the community of the happiness of having the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass offered up in her room, which was also the temporary chapel, the sisters gathered around her bed to listen to some edifying instruction from her lips. These her last utterances sank deep into the hearts of sisters and scholars, and were afterward remembered and repeated for years. For like the busy bee, who at the approach of spring comes to the hive, laden with the fragrant dew of early flowers hidden to the eye of man, so, the provident Mother, nearing her heavenly

home, seemed to borrow from God's own mysteries beyond the grave the glowing thoughts and burning words of divine love for the spiritual food of her sisters. In fact, her precious days were numbered. In the beginning of December, 1812, Father Nerinckx gave her the Last Sacraments of the church in the presence of novices and pupils, and on the early morning of the 11th, happy and fully resigned to the holy will of God, Dear Mother Ann passed to a better life, the first flower of the Loretto garden transplanted in Jesus' heavenly paradise. It was a cold wintry day; the snow thickly fell on the frozen earth, mantling it in pure attire, the more fitly to embosom the virgin corpse that was soon to be intrusted to its dark keeping. Father Nerinckx came down from St. Charles to say the Mass of the dead for the repose of her soul, and Mother Ann was buried according to rule, lying, attired in her religious dress, without a coffin, in the bare grave, preaching blessed and loved poverty even in death.

This method of burying the sisters was observed for over twenty-five years, when, in 1837, Father Boullier, having witnessed the burial of a sister in Perry county, Mo., burst into tears, and vowed he would have that custom changed. He wrote to the Holy Father, whom he had personally known in Rome, and a Brief arrived about two years later ordering the use of a coffin. Mother Agnes, of Pine Bluffs, Arkansas, was the last one buried according to the ancient

rite, on the 21st of August, 1839; however, the bystanders' tribute of roses, and a few boards, preserved her body from the immediate contact of the incumbent earth. The spirit of mortification which actuated Father Nerinckx in all he did, made him no doubt look at death in the light of "*dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return*," and in this matter he consented to the sisters' own wishes. Respect for the virgin remains, which in life were the temple of the Holy Ghost, dictated the action of the other reverend gentleman. Both had holy motives; the former showed more austerity, the latter surely acted more in conformity with the by no means reprehensible feelings of our sensitive and weak human nature.

In his few remarks upon the society, Father Nerinckx pays the following tribute to the memory of the deceased: "Dear Mother Ann was a pious lady before being a nun. She had given a negro girl to Rev. Mr. Badin when he was fixing for a nunnery, which house was destroyed by fire before any girls met to live in it. When Mother Ann came into the Loretto Society, in which she was the fourth in number, she was nearly spent with consumption, of which she died, having been for a few months the first Superior, *and a holy one indeed*."

Deprived of their Mother, the *Friends of Mary at the Foot of the Cross* now realized better what their name implied. At the foot of the plain wooden cross which adorned the last rest-

ing place of their lost Mother, they gave vent to the oft-repeated aspirations, "O Suffering Jesus! O Sorrowful Mary!" with more fervor than ever before, and gathered strength to *stand* with the Sorrowful Mother under the cross of the suffering Jesus when a sword of sorrow pierced their souls. But the consoling voice of Father Nerinckx was not wanting in this sad emergency; from it he took occasion to recall to their minds how short was their hard pilgrimage on earth, and how lasting and glorious their heavenly reward. They now had a mother who would assist them with her prayers above, and should at once proceed to select one to guide them through trials and difficulties here below.

Sister *Mary Rhodes*, the first one who had applied to Father Nerinck for leave to teach, and, in that sense, the foundress of the Society of Friends of Mary, having received the majority of votes, succeeded her sister as Dear Mother, and filled the position for ten years to the satisfaction of all, imparting to her children that first fervor and peculiar spirit of mortification which characterized the establishment of their beloved society. Father Nerinckx confirmed her in the charge, and directed that her assistant in the office should be Sister Christina Stuart, under the title of *Sister Eldest.* Sister Clare Morgan continued to act as head of the school, directing the children, and also the sisters employed in the school with her.

Whilst the new buildings were going up, the

sisters had to protect themselves as best they could against the inclemency of the wintry weather in the two old huts. But they stood bravely that uncommonly cold and dreary season, going themselves to the woods to cut the necessary fuel. It having been found necessary to remove the huts out of the way of the new buildings, they took them down with their own hands. But the convent home was not yet finished; they therefore volunteered to put them up again; and, the walls being very low and composed of small logs, Father Nerinckx allowed the sisters to reconstruct their temporary homes in a more suitable spot, of convenient access from the new convent. "They all willingly undertook humiliating work whenever their temporal wants required any such labor to be done. In this, their humble Father gave them a most admirable example. He industriously took part with them in every kind of hard work, spending whatever time he could spare from his ministerial duties in chopping wood, rolling logs, burning brush, clearing the ground to plant corn, etc. His watchful eye was everywhere. Often would he be seen with hammer, nails, or other tools in hand, fixing doors, mending fences and gates, and always bareheaded, the sun bearing down on his bald pate."*

Poverty was, in fact, the characteristic virtue of the institution. Though industrious and always occupied, the sisters had at first hardly

* Personal recollections of one of the sisters.

enough to live on. Their boarders paid only $32 a year; and many of them, being poor orphans, paid nothing at all for either board, tuition, or clothing. This accounts for the extreme poverty which compelled them to wear their secular clothes with a kerchief or bonnet for head-dress. In the early Winter months of 1813 they began spinning and weaving for their neighbors, and a small pecuniary remuneration enabled them to buy the provisions they stood so much in need of, and to procure clothing material for themselves. The latter was the great object in view; an extra effort was made to have habit and veil, leather belt and scapular ready for the coming festival of August 15th, when the great event was to take place—receiving the black veil and taking the religious vows! An attempt was also made to furnish each sister with a home-made cloak to protect her from the cold during Mass and morning and evening meditations in Winter time; but, unable to procure cloaks for all, they necessarily gave up the idea. Stockings and shoes were worn only from the 1st of November till March 25th, the sisters going barefooted the balance of the year. This severe custom was introduced at the request of the first sisters, who begged of Father Nerinckx to let them try and go barefooted as did the holy anchorites of old. He at first refused the desired permission, but yielded at last to repeated entreaties. Some time before his death, however, he ordered the sisters to

wear shoes all through the year, and never to resume the former practice. During the first years, breakfast consisted of bread and vegetable soup or rye-coffee served in tin cups; supper of bread and milk or sage tea, without either meat or butter; dinner was dished up in tin plates, and consisted of one kind of meat (when they could get it) and vegetables; pious reading during meals was the only desert allowed, unless some neighbor's charity afforded them the luxury of fruit. The beds were the simplest expression that useful piece of furniture is susceptible of, viz: a shake-down of straw on the bare floor, without either sheet or pillow! The sisters were too poor to get any.

And yet, in the midst of this Bethlehemetic poverty, and notwithstanding the fact that no new candidate came to swell their number during the whole year, the good souls were happy and contented; they rejoiced because enabled to suffer in union with the suffering Jesus and the sorrowful Mary. Their clear and cheerful voices re-echoed in the woods, as morning and evening, before and after school, they contentedly sang the praises of God and of his beloved Mother, which, borne on the winds, reached many a worldly ear that had been listening perhaps that very day to some slanderous tale of profane scorn. For, indeed, the sisters had their share of the contempt which the world professes for all that is noble and pure. Had not Christ himself been slandered and vilified? And had not He said

that "the disciple is not above the master," that he had to "take up the Cross and follow him?" "Old priest Nerinckx thought he was doing great things by collecting women together and making nuns of them! But for themselves, they thought—the lofty geniuses!—he was doing a good thing for the country, by clearing it of all the old maids that were in it!" Such and similar were the comments of the worldings of these early times, and such, indeed, are the remarks of the worldings of the present day, when fair young maidens, the flower of society and the pride of their families, cross by the hundreds the threshold of the convent gate, to lay at the feet of their Heavenly Spouse, Jesus Christ, the richest and rarest qualities of heart and mind, of which the world is not worthy! Ah! truly, dear Sisters, the words of our Blessed Lord are as practical to-day as they were eighteen hundred years ago: "If the world hate you, know ye that it hated me before you; if you had been of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember my word that I said to you: the servant is not greater than his Lord. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you." *

*John xv. 18–20.

CHAPTER XVII.

1813–1815.

Taking the veil.—Sister Monica.—Blessing the church and convent.—"Do not forsake Providence."—Pittsburg stoves.—New postulants.—Protestations of the people.—Bishop Flaget explains.

The 15th day of August, 1813, feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, was a day of unusual commotion in the ordinarily quiet settlement on Hardin's Creek. The little log church of St. Charles was crowded to its utmost capacity, and many, unable to gain admission, lined the road, staring wonderingly at the devout procession, which was slowly winding its way from Loretto convent, over the hill to the church. Father Nerinckx was evidently taking more than ordinary interest in the ceremonies of the day, as he stood waiting at the communion railing within the sanctuary. Had not the best sacerdotal apparel which destitution could command bespoken the extraordinary event, the emotion now visible in his usually cold and stern countenance would have betrayed it. Was it a tear of joy he brushed away, when the school children passed two and two up the narrow church

aisle, followed by the five novices, appearing for the first time in their religious dress? Curiosity more than devotion had attracted the forward, pressing crowd; yet, when, at the foot of the altar, Dear Mother Mary, and Sisters Christina, Clare, Ann, and Sarah pronounced, in a firm voice, the holy vows of perpetual Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience, which bound them for life to their Heavenly Spouse, the listeners were filled with a reverential awe; they assisted at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass that followed, and listened to the earnest words of the priest, with a till then unknown attention and devotion. Father Nerinckx was not himself; his pent-up feelings gave vent in burning words of eloquence which enraptured his listeners, and made them forget for a moment all the empty joys of the world, to live on the emotions of the hour that filled their breasts. "The country was rid of those old maids," indeed; but what was that something which welled up in their hearts, and made them feel such respect—aye, admiration—for the self-sacrificing young ladies? Few stopped to consider it; and they soon forgot the holy impressions of that solemn day, in the usual turmoil of worldly occupations.

But one had heard the voice of the Spirit in her inmost soul; and scarcely had the door of the poor little cabin of Loretto shut upon the five humble sisters, when a gentle rap distracted them from the holy joy of heavenly con-

templations which filled their hearts. What worldling dare intrude on such a day and at such an hour on their sacred solitude, and interrupt their intercourse with God?

Open the door wide open, Dear Mother; another child is gathered to the happy little family. She has tasted of the sweetness of self-denial; her "soul thirsteth for the living God," and will only be satisfied when she is gathered to your bosom as one of your own. Miss *Monica Spalding* was looked upon by all who knew her as a model of piety and christian modesty. She was a second cousin of Richard Spalding, of Holy Mary's on the Rolling Fork, and was well known by Father Nerinckx. He used to stop at her kinsman's house when saying Mass at Holy Mary's, where he had baptized, three years previously, Richard Spalding's youngest child, Martin John, the future Bishop of Louisville and Archbishop of Baltimore. The sisters also respected her greatly for her virtuous character, and she was accepted as a postulant the same day. After a short trial, she was permitted to become a novice, retaining her christian name of Sister Monica. Fervent in the world, she continued so in religion; plain and unassuming in her manners and conversation, she made herself agreeable to all. The Almighty was pleased to bless her with a long life, nearly fifty years of which she spent in religion.

A short time after Sister Monica became a

novice, a Miss Hayden arrived from Missouri, and begged of Father Nerinckx and the sisters to be received into the society. Far from church and priest, she never had had the opportunity of making her first communion; but no sooner had the news reached her in her distant home, that a sisterhood was established in Kentucky, than, anxious to consecrate herself to God, she started on her long lonely journey, and she had the happiness of receiving her God in her heart the very day on which she pledged to Him her virgin affections by becoming a novice among the Friends of Mary.

As the community increased in numbers, the school became more and more popular and frequented. On his missionary tours, Father Nerinckx would often expatiate on the advantages of a catholic education, and he prevailed upon many parents to send their girls to Loretto in order to have them receive the catholic instruction and literary training which they could not procure for them in their new settlements. Upon returning to their homes, these young ladies were a great help to the missionary priest, who intrusted to them, during his absence, the catechetical instruction of the children. Their proficiency in reading and writing and their polished manners also favorably impressed the parents, and induced many more to procure for their children the same priceless boon of a convent education.

This induced Father Nerinckx to think se-

riously about the necessity of increasing the boarding facilities of his now flourishing institution; and it being impossible to collect the necessary funds among his people, he again applied to Bishop Flaget for permission to go to Europe to solicit the required help. His request was granted in the Spring of 1814, and Father Nerinckx at once set to work completing the only unfinished buildings, viz: the church and convent. He soon had the church adorned inside, as well as his scanty means would allow, and ready for services. The altar being built, the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary was again transferred, from the oratory in the kitchen building, to an honorable place above the tabernacle. The bell belonging to Father Nerinckx, and which, up to that time, had remained at Father Badin's dwelling, was carried home and placed in the handsome little steeple gracing the middle of the roof. Its silvery tones rang out sweet and joyful when, a few days after, Bishop Flaget blessed the church and convent, into which the sisters moved the same day, giving it the title of Little Loretto. Every thing now being ready, and the Bishop having volunteered to attend as best he could to his numerous congregations scattered far and wide, Father Nerinckx set out for Baltimore. Here he had the happiness of paying his respects to his Grace, Archbishop Carroll, whom he had not seen since he first set out for his Western missionary home. The Archbishop received him

with the utmost kindness, and having learned the object of his coming, urged him strongly to defer his trip until the war with England would have ceased; because, apart from the danger of his being captured by the British, the high seas were just then also infested with Algerian pirates. Father Nerinckx promptly complied with the advice of the good prelate, and he hastened home again, where he was welcomed with the most unequivocal demonstrations of joy by sisters and people.

He at once resumed his accustomed labors. The prospects were rather gloomy: no means on hand, debts incurred for the latest improvements; no land cleared; how could the sisters be sustained? Who would clear the land for them? But, always full of confidence in God, Father Nerinckx struggled bravely on; and to those who would fain have discouraged him, by asking how he would manage to keep up the struggling institution, he invariably answered with his now famous motto: "*Do not forsake Providence, and He will never forsake you.*" Nor was he deceived.

An old widowed lady of most virtuous life, Mrs. Ryan by name, having been received among the novices, her aged brother, Mr. Vincent Gates, soon after offered to Father Nerinckx his life-long services for the benefit of Loretto convent. Being of an irreproachable character, he readily obtained Father Nerinckx' consent to live in the middle cabin near the gar-

den; and, helped at times by the priest. he set to work clearing the land around the convent home, and procuring for the sisters' use the firewood which, up to this time, they had had to cut themselves. A horse, the gift of Bishop Flaget, was a welcome addition to their means of support, and, though partly blind, became a valuable aid in hauling logs and in plowing up the limited clearings. Under the interested and careful management of old Mr. Gates, the farm soon yielded the vegetables, cotton, and flax for the use of the house. Having received a small amount of money from Europe, Father Nerinckx also sent, in 1814, for the first stoves introduced into Kentucky. They were shipped on the Ohio, all the way from Pittsburg, and cost him $100 apiece, besides freight charges!

In the meantime, the school flourished beyond all expectations under the wise superintendence of Sister Clare. The young ladies made rapid progress not only in learning, but especially in virtue. Daily witnesses of the austere life and virtuous demeanor of their teachers, they could not but feel the beneficial effects of their example, and they formed themselves into sodalities and other pious associations, which soon bore their happy fruits. Early in 1815, Miss Ann Hart, who had been a pupil at Loretto, where she had qualified herself to teach a school in the neighborhood of her parents' home in Breckinridge county, returned to the convent for the ostensible purpose of pursuing her studies, but in

reality with the intention of joining the sisterhood. When she was yet a scholar in the institution, her parents had prevented her from becoming a nun, alleging that she was too young. She was now independent, being of age; and, upon her earnest solicitation, she was admitted temporarily into the community with the consent of Father Nerinckx, who advised her parents of the step she intended to take. Her father came to Loretto, had a private interview with her, and, having declared himself perfectly satisfied as to the call of his child to a religious life, the new postulant soon received the habit and took the name of Sister Agnes.

Her example was not lost on the other pupils. The greater number, indeed, returned to the world, fully prepared to battle with life, becoming the joy and pride of their parents, and, in the course of time, the respected mothers of exemplary catholic families. But that same year, three of the boarders, only fifteen years of age, manifested a wish to join the sisterhood. They had deliberated earnestly and for three years on this most important step, and, although young in years, had, under the solid training of the sisters and the austere discipline of Father Nerinckx, become much more grave in disposition and sedate in manners than many a young girl of mature age. Their minds were fully made up, and their entreaties to be received as postulants were so persistent that, with the consent

of their parents, they were admitted on probation.

Hitherto, the ceremony of taking the veil and making the vows had been performed in St. Charles church. When the time came for the young ladies to be admitted as novices, Father Nerinckx gave orders to have it done in the convent chapel, which had by this time received all the interior decorations which poverty could well bestow upon the house of God. In consequence, Misses *Ann Clarke*, *Esther Grundy*, and *Ann Wathen*, emphatically the children of Loretto and the institution's offering of first fruits, had the well-merited happiness of being the first to consecrate themselves to God in the convent chapel. Father Nerinckx gave them the names respectively of Sisters Isabella, Theresa, and Juliana. The day of their reception was one of unclouded happiness and inexpressible joy for sisters and children, and for Father Nerinckx, it was an unmistakable token that Providence had blessed his work.

The whole thing passed off to the satisfaction of all parties concerned; but as usual, the outside world, ever narrow and mercenary in its views, and ready to unwarrantably interfere, assumed the privilege of a word or two on the subject. Everywhere and at all times abusive and inconsistent, the worldlings, who a few months ago congratulated themselves and Kentucky at large upon old priest Nerinckx' ridding the country of its old maids, and held him up to

the ridicule of their fellow-men, now censured him severely—aye, threatened him publicly with their vengeance—for thus taking from their midst the youthful and promising portion of the community, the hope and pride of their families, and shutting them up in a nunnery to pine away and wear out their lives in a few short years by austerity and penance. Good old Sister Isabella could afford to laugh at their idle fears when, sixty years later, she lived to remember and relate to the writer these wild predictions of men who had then rested for many long years under the green sod.

However, their clamorous protestations grew so loud and fierce that Bishop Flaget thought it his duty to interfere. The announcement that the Bishop, who, in the short time since his arrival in the country, had completely gained their good will, was to officiate in St. Charles, brought a great concourse of people to the church on that particular Sunday. The prelate ascended the pulpit after the Gospel amidst the breathless expectation of the curious auditory. He commenced by congratulating the congregation upon the great advantages which the possession of a convent would confer upon themselves and children. He feelingly expatiated on the happy results and lasting benefits which their families would derive from the teachings of the sisters, and sketched the vocation of a religious and teacher of the ignorant in such glow-

ing colors, that many a mother felt aggrieved that such a glorious career was not in store for her daughter. He then gained the men over to the cause of religion and education, by reflecting severely upon the unjust attacks made by certain parties against their pastor, for allowing young ladies to be free in the choice of their own vocation, whilst these very men had not a word of blame for parents who would compel their daughters to enter the matrimonial state against their wishes and make them miserable for life. In the case in point, the postulants were able to choose for themselves, and had the fullest consent of their parents. Young ladies would never be received into the society as long as parents or guardians had any reasonable objection to offer; but when they were of age, and no serious objection could be urged against their admission, no catholic priest would prevent them from following the call of God; it would be a downright folly to blame the priest for accepting them, and an intolerable tyranny to curtail their freedom.

This address of the Bishop somewhat checked the outspoken complaints of the fault-finders, his clear reasoning on the subject precluding all specious objections; and the young ladies who had been the innocent cause of this outburst of fanatic indignation and of unasked-for pity, joyously entered upon the duties of their new state of life. The high hopes which Father Nerinckx had conceived of them and which the devil

had tried so hard to thwart, were subsequently more than fulfilled. Two of them lived to become Dear Mothers or Superiors General of the Friends of Mary; the third one had the honor of establishing the second branch-house of the society, and the happiness of securing its permanent usefulness under her short but saintly administration.

CHAPTER XVIII.

1815–1816.

Father Nerinckx goes to Europe.—Notes by the way.—His journey to Rome.—Impressions: the Rome of the Emperors and the Rome of the Popes.—Pius VII.—The papal blessing.—The Loretto rules approved.—Return to Belgium.

At the earnest request of Bishop Flaget, Father Nerinckx had already delayed for three years his intended journey to Europe on business connected with the missions. He was especially anxious to obtain the recognition and approval of his Society, "the Friends of Mary at the Foot of the Cross," by the then reigning Pontiff, Pius VII. The peace of Ghent, concluded December 24, 1814, had put an end to the war with England, which had prevented his leaving that year; and convinced that the glory of God and the benefit of religion urgently demanded his going, he again applied to the Bishop for permission to undertake the journey. Seeing that he could not reasonably object any longer to the departure of the courageous missionary, the Bishop, although much distressed in mind, gave his consent, and took upon himself to attend most of Rev. Nerinckx' congrega-

tions, besides acting as chaplain to the infant Society of Loretto. Accordingly, Father Nerinckx set out, on the 10th of September, 1815, on his long and wearisome journey to Belgium and Rome. He made his way to Maryland as best he could, and there, among his former acquaintances and friends, collected money enough to take him to Belgium.

"When I arrived in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, at the Rev. Mr. O'Brien's," he writes in his journal, "a man knocked at the door, and being admitted into the room, fell on his knees, and with outstretched hands and tearful eyes exclaimed: 'My dear Fathers, is there no mercy for us? We are poor abandoned catholics; nobody comes to see us. It is twelve years since I was with a priest. We are several families, only seventy-two miles from here. Oh! for the love of God, come and pay us a visit!'" This little incident, of daily occurrence on the missions, made a lasting impression on our missionary, and induced him to hasten on his way, with the firm determination of gaining some of his countrymen to the cause of the poor neglected catholics of America, and of bringing them out with him.

He tarried in Belgium only long enough to greet a few friends and obtain the necessary means to continue his journey, and from Brussels hastened to Rome, which he reached in thirty-seven days. Father Nerinckx' Flemish account of this journey, printed in Belgium in

1816,* is too suggestive of the man to be omitted here. A lover of the beautiful in the house of God, his mind was too thoroughly christian to be favorably impressed with the marvels of art of the old pagan world. His austere virtue makes him pass a severe verdict upon what a more refined or facile taste might admire as exquisite beauty. He pronounces most of these classical relics "heathenish and immodest." The somber forests of North America were rather unfavorable to acquiring a correct understanding of the world's notions of the beautiful; and the arduous and often sterile missionary duties of the self-sacrificing priest of Kentucky, were little calculated to develop a taste for the *beau idéal* as presented in the city of Rome—flattered favorite of the muses—by the ancient monuments so profusely strewn over the classic soil of romantic Italy.

"Having left Brussels," the 20th of February, 1816, "I went by Valenciennes, Paris, Lyons, Chambery, Turin, Milan, Plaisance, Parma, Modena, Ancona, and Loretto, and arrived in Rome in thirty-seven days. The journey was rather long, but it was much more expensive. What I admired most, let alone Paris which is sufficiently known, is Mount Cenis, which, being covered with snow, presents a very singular appearance. However, when passing it, I experi-

* "Aan myne vrienden en Bloedverwanten. Tot Gend, by Bernard Poelman, op de Hoogpoorte, in het gekroond Zweird." No date.

enced none of the terrible impressions which, upon reading the accounts of others, I imagined I would feel at the sight of it. The road was broad and easy, and in five hours I was over the mountain." Behold the matter-of-fact pioneer of the American forests! Guided by the steady hand of his fearless rider, his noble horse *Printer* had paced many a road more uneven than the Cenis highway. The Kentucky wilds presented more obstacles to the weary missionary, tracking an unfrequented path through the virgin forests in search of the log cabin of the solitary backwoodsman, than did this snow-topped giant to the light-hearted Roman pilgrim!

"Savoy, like the greater part of Italy, is more picturesque than rich. Turin is a beautiful city The church at Milan, which is far from being completed, needs not, in my opinion, yield to any, in point of art. It is the most wonderful mass of marble which skilled hands have ever raised. It contains an underground church, where rests the body of my Holy Patron, the great Charles Borromeo. I had the happiness of seeing the crystal repository in which it lies arrayed in pontifical garments, and I also visited the palace where he was born. Parma, Plaisance, and Modena have left me no impressions which I care to remember. Loretto, in the Pontifical States, through which the easiest, if not the shortest way to Rome led me, is a poor place, and would have nothing to detain the traveler, were it not for the grand and touching devotion

to the miraculous statue of the Blessed Virgin enthroned in the beautiful church which shelters the holy House of Nazareth.

"Three days and a half traveling took me from Loretto to Rome. The antique and remarkable monuments which I saw on my way, and of which writers say so much, did not make upon me the impression which travelers usually describe as produced upon them. They are remarkable curiosities, merely because they are old. Writers tell us that they are the works of men who surpassed us in art and genius; but paganism shows in them its stupidity, immodesty, and cruelty, whilst it exhibits but few signs of civilization, courage, and humanity.

"There are many cities on the way, but few rural villages; hence the road is a solitary one. The houses, covered with a kind of half-round tiles, are built of stone, ugly outside, and dirty inside; in fact, they are filthy and uncomfortable. As soon as you come within French territory, and until you arrive at Rome, every thing partakes of that common uncleanliness, and the churches are not free from it. The roads are, generally speaking, broad and good; all along we notice the works which Napoleon erected with our money for his own ends; some are praiseworthy, others will last only as long as the Emperor himself. Porticos, columns, and obelisks which recount his ruinous victories, and which are now falling under the revengeful hammer of the nations, are about the only compen-

sation he left for the extensive devastation and ruin of all the beautiful, artistic, and precious, which Church and State had worked out with so much perseverance and trouble in past centuries.

"Inns are few; the relays are almost the only ones, always expensive and seldom good. The landlord and lady are rarely polite, and leave the reception of travelers to a clerk, who troubles himself very little about the comfort of the guests. As soon as you leave Flanders and the environs of Paris, the land becomes poorer; there is hardly as much good soil from Paris to Rome, as there is in the region of Alost. Compared to ours, farm work here is child's play, and experience has taught me the truth of what an Englishman whom I met on my travels said to me: 'When you have traveled through Belgium, you may stop all inquiries about agriculture.' Land, cattle, and people bear testimony to the soundness of that remark. No wonder, then, that the nations love so well to fight on that lovely spot, and always quarrel for its mastery. They laugh at us and scorn us; but the fox also thought the grapes sour—when he could not reach them.

"The examination of passports and trunks at the several custom-houses takes up much valuable time; and here, as well as in the hotels, the officials look for the little contribution, called *la bonne main* in France, and *la bona manu* in Italy. These everlasting gratuities, together with the alms-givings, amount, in the end, to quite a sum.

Were I to travel the same road over again, I would undoubtedly, if I could, procure one or two companions, hire a coach from Brussels, or at least from Paris, through to Rome. For a person in my position, there is many a reason for following such a course. My present journey and a six weeks' stay in Rome can hardly be undertaken with less than four hundred *louis*.

"With regard to the famous capital of the world, I here give you my impressions in a few words:

"The antiquities, works of art, extent of the city, and manners of the people, although new and strange to me, can not command my admiration; but one can not but be filled with respect and veneration, when turning his attention to the treasures of christian art. The remaining temples with their antique columns crumbling to pieces under the weight of time; with their mutilated idols and obscene representations, the shame and degradation of the fallen human race —the marvelous and famous public buildings, houses, and palaces of the conquerors of nations, to-day in ruins and hardly recognizable without the guide book which contains a list of all that pagan Rome once possessed—all those great beings: famous conquerors and far-famed wise men, that horrible assemblage of great and small, good and evil, rich and poor, which gave the law to the three parts of the then known world; above all, that long roll of crowned monsters, who for the first three hundred years waged war

against the God and Founder of the catholic church and against a multitude of martyrs, and whose memory is well-nigh obliterated or barely traceable upon a piece of fallen wall, a pillar crumbled into dust, a dilapidated turret, a half arch of a ruined bridge, a broken vault under which no tourist dare venture—all these things, I say, once so great and admirable, now so little and despicable, made but a weak impression upon me; for they spoke only of what is said here and everywhere, and what St. Teresa expresses so well with a '*tout passe;*' every thing earthly passes away.

"But when, from the old and pagan Rome, I turned my eyes to the new and catholic Rome, I felt something difficult to express in words. Instead of all these fallen thrones, these triumphant chariots, these armies of thousands loaded down with the spoils of nations brought to beggary and slavery—instead of all these, I beheld on Holy Thursday, high up on the balcony of St. Peter's church, the most magnificent building of the world, a most amiable and modest old man, with virtue depicted on his countenance and love divine in his heart; stronger alone and without arms, than Napoleon himself with his legions and his free-mason lodges; the successor of Peter; the Father of the christians; carried on the shoulders of picked Roman youths, having no other noise around him but the ringing of religious joy; receiving no expressions of respect and veneration but such as

are ultimately directed to the one true and living God; distributing no gifts but out of the treasury, the keys of which are intrusted to him by that Sovereign Lord, who, without doing injury to any one, gathered his riches at his own expense—at the price of his blood, for the good of all! Here, I beheld the crowned heads of Spain and Etruria, surrounded by great dignitaries and foreigners from all lands and nations, bending low under the blessing hand of the Pontiff; and cheerfully and willingly did they do so. Protestants and infidels themselves could but behave with respect on that solemn occasion; and, if they do not love our Holy Father in their hearts, they are nevertheless forced to acknowledge to their friends that Pius VII truly wields in Rome the power of Pope, of Father—father above all, of universal father of all christians, and is truly clothed with supreme power over all the catholics of the earth, right here in Rome. In Rome, I say, where paganism gathered in all its strength, and disputed for three hundred years with catholicity the mastery of the world, to its utter ruin and confusion! In Rome, the object of the hatred and calumnies of all the branches of error, we behold the successor of the poor fisherman, who, in that same Rome, was crucified with his head downward by the pagans, borne in triumph over the ashes of prostrated paganism and of the foolish wisdom of the ancients. And, notwithstanding the jealousy which schism, heresy, and atheism

with all its brood, cause to rage in their breasts, the unbelievers are struck with amazement, and unwillingly acknowledge that the representative of a God crucified—the Pope of Rome—making the sign of the cross over the admiring multitude, rules, by the motion of his hand, over the city and the world, over the bodies and souls of the numberless peoples of this and distant lands. Kneeling among thousands in the grand *plaza* in front of St. Peter's balcony on that Holy Thursday, amidst the din of vibrating bells, cannon, and music, I can not express the feeling which that solemn sight awoke in my heart. 'Where,' I asked of myself, 'are those Roman consuls, those Emperors and Kings—all those powerful and dreaded men?' I seek them in vain; nothing is left of them. . . . And who is the object of all this respect, of this display of the magnificence in the Imperial City? Pius VII, the Pope of Rome; the Pope alone. . . . But he is the Antichrist, the leader of superstition, clamor heretics and Jews! He is a tyrant and usurper in the Church of God of a power which does not belong to him, growl Schismatics! He is an adorer of new Gods, the idol and personification of fanaticism—the coryphaeus of the rabble, mildly assent the *Illuminati* clubs and lodges! Indeed! . . . Look around you: here is a Bishop from Armenia; there a prelate from Switzerland; yonder a fanatic from Constantinople; further on a stoic Englishman and a cool-headed American; in

fact, men of all lands, nations, and climes. None is out of his wits; none is drunk; none in fanatic convulsions; and yet all are absorbed in respectful contemplation, and look as transfixed upon the appearance of Pius. . . . More was not needed to appreciate, at their full value, the slanderous epithets so liberally thrown at the head of our church by this 'Generation of Vipers.' I received the blessing of the Father of christians, as the missionary to, and the representative of, a great country in the New World, where I will give an account to my catholic brethren of all these touching events. . . .

"Rome is, in the literal sense of the word, a repository of religious monuments; every street, in and outside of the walls, is filled with them, and it would take years to examine them in detail. The one that has made the most lasting impression upon me, is the wonderful church of St. Peter, where I had the happiness of offering the unbloody Sacrifice of the Mass over the bodies of St. Peter and Paul, in the underground chapel. The whole world unanimously acknowledges that this building is the master-piece of man's genius and skill, that art and invention have here exhausted themselves on this *ne plus ultra* of grandeur and beauty. Next in beauty ranks the richly adorned Sancta Maria Maggiore, or Our Lady of Snow, where I also said Mass in a chapel under ground, before the Crib in which lay our Saviour. Sta. Maria Rotunda, so-called because the church is built in a round

shape, is the Pantheon of the old Romans—that is, the repository of all the false gods of unhappy paganism. Here was the seat of error; with reason, then, did Divine Providence enthrone in its place that truth which is to abide forever. The church of the Portuguese is small; but is a gem of beauty and riches.

"I pass over many beautiful churches, palaces, (the Vatican and other magnificent buildings), aqueducts, fountains, amphitheaters, columns, etc., etc. Among the latter the *Colonna Trajana* is a noteworthy one: it is surmounted by a statue of St. Paul, the Apostle beheaded by the sword at the hands of men eager for honors, money, and blood, which says to the looker-on: 'So is he exalted who humbles himself for Christ and his doctrine.' The catacombs, underground burying-places, where by the flickering light of a lamp the guide points out to you the hollow places in which the bodies of the great confessors and martyrs were deposited; where the followers of Christ, to escape the wrath of the tyrants, hid themselves with their Popes and priests, and celebrated the divine mysteries, are full of touching remembrances. Convents, colleges, libraries, hospitals, academies, museums, where I admired especially the instruments of torture invented to test the fortitude of Martyrs, and in consequence the truth of our religion, all these furnish abundant material for the curiosity and piety of the traveler, and too much to occupy ourselves any longer with them.

"I will now tell you, in a few words, how I fared in Rome. I arrived there on Thursday before Passion Week. A congregation of Cardinals was held at the Propaganda the next Monday, and it pleased the Lord that the business, the documents of which I had sent last year from Kentucky, was just brought before it for solution. After the session, I had the honor of an interview with one of the Cardinals, who was so kind as to assure me that the congregation of the Propaganda was well pleased with our new institution, the 'Friends of Mary at the Foot of the Cross,' and had taken it under its special protection. They conceded to it all the favors and privileges attached to the Institution of the Seven Dolors, established in the city of Rome. He assured me that the difficulties and questions submitted to the Congregation would be answered soon, that my work was approved of, and that all the documents would reach me in Belgium in time for me to set out for America before Winter. That was as much as I could wish.

"I remained in Rome about six weeks longer, and had the happiness of seeing some Cardinals, who received me with the utmost kindness, notwithstanding my poor clothes and less inviting exterior." What Father Nerinckx does not tell, is, that he constantly frequented the Gesu, and that the air of sanctity which pervades Rome—that religious atmosphere which acts upon all who come under its influence, and

makes the great and good of other climes, like unto exotic flowers acclimatized to and enhanced by its bright sunbeams and emerald sky, feel a new life course through their veins—made the old missionary priest long more than ever for the religious life of the cloister. Our authority for this statement is a letter from a Roman priest, a Jesuit of Sant' Andrea del Quirinale, written to Rev. Father Grassi, Superior of the Jesuits of North America, in which he says: "We possess, just now, a very holy American missionary—Father Nerinckx. He wishes to become a Jesuit; but it is deemed for the glory of God, that he should remain where and as he is." This last endeavor to reach a religious sanctuary seems to have satisfied the missionary that he really was where God wanted him, and he spoke of it no more.

"During my stay in Rome," he continues, "I was told that the College of the Propaganda had no subjects to send to our regions; that there was question of erecting a new diocese in Upper Louisiana, at St. Louis, Illinois Territory; that the Coadjutor, Bishop Neale, had succeeded Archbishop Carroll in the See of Baltimore; that the very worthy Mr. Maréchal, professor at the Seminary of Baltimore, was appointed to the Episcopal See of Philadelphia, etc.

"I was present at the grand ceremonies of Easter Sunday in the cathedral church of the world. On the 1st of May, at eight P. M., I was,

together with three other gentlemen, introduced to the Holy Father by a Prelate. We had a most friendly audience, and, after the three others had received the marks of a fatherly affection, I myself was favored at his feet with his Apostolical benediction and other tokens of tenderness." His Holiness, having already personally perused the rules of the new society, was pleased to tell him of the joy and consolation the institution of his sisterhood had caused him; that he believed some portions of the rules too rigid for females, and thought it necessary to have some changes made in order to render their observance more lasting, adding that he would see to it that the changes were communicated to him in writing as soon as practicable. These, however, were not sent to Kentucky till a few years later. "The 4th of May, I left Rome, and in six weeks I arrived at the place of my departure," Brussels, in Belgium.

CHAPTER XIX.

1816.

A letter from Bishop Flaget: the Loretto institution a success.—Father Nerinckx' appeal to his Belgian countrymen for men and money.—Its wonderful effects.

Father Nerinckx now set to work collecting alms, ornaments, holy vessels, etc., for the missions. We will have occasion to enter into a more detailed account of this very successful appeal to the generosity of his countrymen. Our readers will allow us to complete the translation of the Flemish pamphlet addressed by Father Nerinckx to his Belgian friends, in August, 1816. It has perhaps not the interest which a closer narration of facts might possess; but, were it only for its important results, the omission of this rather lengthy appeal of the missionary for co-laborers in the vineyard of the Lord, would be unwarranted. Many Fathers of the Society of Jesus, now venerable for their age and their labors on the mission, have assured us that they owed their vocation to the reading of the following pages, and this forcible plea in favor of the American mission was the instrument in the

hands of Providence to bring them to the shores of the New World.

"At my return home," continues Father Nerinckx, "I found a letter of the Right Reverend Bishop of Kentucky, a few extracts of which I here copy: 'Your letter of November 29, 1815, was handed to me the 2d day of March (1816), and I read it again and again with renewed pleasure. I communicated it to your pious daughters, who were highly delighted with it, and I read it in all your parishes, where it elicited the same feelings of joy. Everywhere I had public prayers to thank God for your happy arrival, and to ask Him to grant you a speedy and safe return. All the reverend gentlemen thank you for your kind remembrance, and desire me to be the interpreter of their good wishes for your welfare. Your good daughters of Loretto continue pious and full of fervor; they are, at the same time, my joy and my confusion. . . . Sister Agnes made her vows on St. Joseph's day, and three boarders have been admitted to their first communion. Those ceremonies have made a very salutary impression. Three young novices came the next day to beg of me to be allowed to make their vows on the day of Annunciation. There are at least twenty-five boarders, all of excellent disposition; three or four of them are very anxious to receive the habit. Applications for admission are received from every direction, and I am afraid that, after Easter, we shall have more

subjects than the house can accommodate or support. I bought old Stephen and Dinah; they cost me one hundred and thirty *gourdes*, and they render valuable services to the house; henceforth, the sisters are dispensed from cutting wood and carrying it to the yard. . . . A Methodist preacher living on the neighboring hill, where we are going to build a second convent, has forced me into a public discussion. The concourse of catholic and protestant neighbors was great. The good God, in his mercy, has allowed that miserable deceiver to be loaded with shame and contempt even by those of his own sect.' The letter contains some minor details which I omit.

"They expect me back soon, and, if it depends on me alone, I will soon be in Kentucky. I gather the little provisions as fast as I can, and if I do not obtain all that we expected or are in need of, I trust, however, that my journey will not have been undertaken in vain. My mission *ad limina apostolorum* was a duty, and that is fulfilled. The institution is approved of; instructions are obtained; difficulties are answered; spiritual favors, relics, etc., are received; some necessary books and ornaments are in my possession; Rome is somewhat consoled; and the curiosity of friends and countrymen is somewhat satisfied, or perhaps more excited than ever.

"Catholic Belgium has the enviable reputation, in Rome itself, of being, for the last thirty

years, the vanguard of the church against all the heretical and philosophical innovations of these times. St. Francis Xavier expressed a decided wish of having Belgians for his East India missions, and obtained some of decided merit. I am obliged to be satisfied with the want of them. I learned with pleasure that during my absence in Rome, three of our neighborhood (environs of Ninove) left to join the Jesuits in Georgetown, and that the Bishop of New Orleans succeeded in obtaining some in Italy and France; but how little will he notice these few drops in our vast ocean! I have done what I could to induce some priests to accompany me, and my conscience is at rest. May God dispose all things according to his holy will!

"Allow me, however, to present a few observations to some of my acquaintances and friends, who, full of faith, yet betrayed some alarm when they became aware of my desire of taking along some Belgian priests to work in our deserted missions of America. Their conduct, I allow, proceeds from a great attachment to Religion and from a laudable desire to save souls at home; but if I am not mistaken, their charity, which should extend to all, is rather too limited. They object that those laborers are also needed in Belgium; indeed they are, and very much so! I remember the happy times when Belgium had ten evangelical laborers to the one of to-day; and men, at that, who were animated with zeal; adorned with the most solid piety, doctrine, and

learning; men of influence, commanding respect, giving public edification, thirsting early and late, as did the Apostles, for the salvation of souls; and they were helped most generously by noble auxiliary armies of religious, led and encouraged by heroic Bishops, who went through all the trials of persecution, and were surrounded by counselors able to fill with honor important episcopal Sees. Then did countless religious institutions flourish, whence morality, virtue, and piety flowed, as through so many channels, out to the multitude. In those happy times, no one found that the number of priests was too great except those whose heart was corrupted, to whom the yoke of religion, that is of God himself, had become a burden, and who had not courage enough to fight the world, after the example of the Author of our faith; or who, slaves to their passions, pride, and avarice, were already in a fair way to despise alike God, his religion, and his ministers. Hence I do not wonder at those objections of to-day, which, if they were true in those times, must surely be true now, and will likely always exist

"But tell me candidly: Is there a christian in our land, who, if he sincerely tried, could not approach the Holy Sacraments every month? Is there one, who, owing to the want of priests, is obliged to leave this world without the rites of the church? Where is the child to be found, who has to sigh without baptism in the slavery of the devil, even for three days? Where is the

pastor or priest who, when he rises in the morning, can not travel from one end of his parish to the other before the evening of the same day? Who is there in any portion of our Netherlands who can not, if he wishes it, see his pastor and talk to him twice in the day? Is that the case in America? Ah! would to God it were so! Alas! Not to speak of other regions of that vast continent, in my mission, a man coming on a sick call from my congregation of the Sacred Hearts, has to travel every day between forty and fifty miles on horseback for four days, ere he can reach my cabin at St. Charles; and if I am at home (for, many a time, other calls and occupations keep me away), we have to ride another four days to see if the sick person has succeeded in struggling against death for a whole week. The distances to St. James', St. Rumoldus', St. Teresa's, etc., are from three to four, five, and six days' travel back and forth. To pay one single visit to each one of my congregations, and remain three or four days in each station, which is only a short stop considering the circumstances and the needs of the people, I have to spend six weeks on the road without taking a day's rest, devoting the whole time to travel, hearing confessions, instruction, and administration of the sacraments. I merely mention how I am situated, because I know what labors devolve upon myself; my brother priests are not better off. . . .

"I just now met my brother, who is in the

holy ministry in London, after having been separated from him by persecution and exile for nineteen years. He is asked to try and find some priests who have commiseration enough to go and help our abandoned brethren of the Cape of Good Hope and Grenada, one of the Antilles Islands. The jurisdiction over these missions devolves upon the Bishop of London, and the English government pays for the missionary's traveling expenses. In that region, twenty thousand catholics are without a single priest, and with heavy hearts call for help, and entreat some one to go and take care of them."

Father Nerinckx here relates the Pittsburg incident, which we mentioned in the previous chapter, and continues:

"What think you, my dear friends? Considering the position of your fellow-men and of him who comes in the name of them all to entreat of you *one* priest out of a hundred, that he may prevent, by coming to their help, these dying sheep, among whom are so many pleading and starving lambs, from losing, for all eternity, their 'precious soul in the throat of a devouring wolf,' is it in accordance with christian charity to prevent that one from coming? Nay, is it consistent with charity to try to limit the number of those who are willing to come? Is true and sincere charity, like that of Him who has made all souls His at the price of His blood and loved them all alike—Americans and Indians,

as well as Belgians—is true and sincere charity without meaning when it says: 'I love my neighbor as myself for the love of Thee?' Is that, I ask it once more, is that being animated with the true christian spirit for the increase of the kingdom of God and the salvation of souls? Is it to be tolerated, to envy or to deny to thousands a mouthful of bread in the far distant missions, for fear of suffering want when we are more than satiated at home? That many in the Netherlands despise the spiritual food to-day, is a sad truth. Were these our friends compelled to come and share in America the abandonment of our catholics for only three years, do you think that, at the time of a contagious disease, they would not dare to ask a priest of the Netherlands to come to their help for fear of depriving their own country of spiritual assistance? Oh no! . . . If such had been the case at the time of SS. Amandus, Willebrordus, Rumoldus, Livinus, etc., what would Belgium be to-day?

"There is, in my way of thinking, a reason to fear the loss of the gift of faith, when we neglect to procure it to others, or to work to give them the same advantages we enjoy. *Cuilibet Deus mandavit de proximo suo*, 'God has given every one charge of his neighbor,' is not an expression without meaning. When I attended the *Concursus*, we had to prove that this duty could bind us under pain of mortal sin; and I would like to know if it could bind more strictly

than in the present case? It is unnecessary to write a volume of divine sayings, counsels, commands, and examples, which leave us without an excuse for neglecting to go to the rescue of these the most abandoned of all our brethren. To refuse them that help, seems to me to call for divine vengeance; such a refusal is stamped with the seal of the blackest ingratitude toward Christ who came to save us all, and of the most barbarous cruelty toward these catholics, who, without our help, run the risk of their eternal salvation. And, were it gone so far—from which I pray a merciful God will preserve us—that the Netherlanders had offended the so justly incensed Lord so much, that the loss of faith is unavoidable, will half a dozen more or less laborers avert the impending storm? Would it not, perhaps, be good policy to let a few go elsewhere, there to form a small seminary for the coming need? He who compares the present times with the past, will easily perceive that our holy religion is threatened more than ever; more weight may make the balance swing the other way. If, and I hope it from God's mercy, you keep your faith without any merits of your own, will you feel aggrieved because you helped to promote the cause of religion and to keep it up in far distant countries? And, if you lose the faith, will it be of any benefit to you, that with you, and perhaps through you, our abandoned regions shared with you this most unhappy lot? When I meet with persons in

want, I always feel more kindly toward those who generously share with others the alms they received. In our case, such a course would, in my humble opinion, be most agreeable to God: a goodly part left to our friends of the Netherlands, and a mite for our American brethren.

"If I appear to dwell on this matter longer than I ought to, his Lordship, the Bishop of London, who told my brother that he entertained a preference for Netherlanders for his mission, will partly be my justification. This is surely flattering to our national character. Yet it serves not my purpose, and my friends are too easily alarmed at the prospect of seeing our clergy emigrate in a body to the American missions; for, up to this day, August 7, 1816, I did not succeed in prevailing upon a single priest to devote himself to the work. To be sure, some seem to pity our position and to deplore the sufferings of the people under our care; but pity does not help us any.

"The usual objections are: Old age, lack of vocation, want of talents, ignorance of the language, the wants at home, want of money for the journey, their present position, etc., etc. *Old age*, together with bodily infirmities, is surely an obstacle to go through much fatigue, although I have many a time seen an iron will and real fervor an efficient help to overcome the infirmities of old age. For instance, years ago, I met, in our *Concursus* at Mechlin, many an old man who would most willingly have put his weak

shoulders under the heavy burden of a tolerably difficult and extensive parish. The Archbishop of Mechlin at eighty-two, and the Archbishop of Paris at ninety-two years of age, were not afraid of undertaking the direction of these dioceses with the fervor of youth! *Vocation*, so necessary and essential in the ministry of the ecclesiastical state, should indeed not be wanting to such an undertaking; hence, it is very necessary to examine it. Neglect of this precaution is perhaps the cause of the universal ruin wherewith the world is threatened. I myself will deplore, in a strange land for the rest of my days, my too great boldness in that respect. But would my friends allow me to ask, whether they knew many candidates who, before accepting a position, be it clerical or civil, in this country, made the reservation: '*Si sim vocatus*,' I will accept if I am called to it? Is that practically the *sine qua non* of those who are ready to fill places becoming vacant? I am afraid, and not without reason, that by far too little time is consecrated to a conscientious examination of that matter. I can hardly understand how so many hundreds, nay, thousands, to whom the *ite, docete omnes gentes*, go and teach all nations, has been so forcibly—and surely not without a purpose—addressed by a lawful authority, pretend to fulfill its obligations within the narrow limits of the Netherlands. Those who examined, knew, or fulfilled their calling less well, could do worse than try to remedy this defect with me, by fit-

ting themselves as thoroughly as time and talents will permit, to solace, with the Samaritan, our sorely wounded brethren in those regions where priest or levite can not or will not come. Our labors, our voluntary privations, our sweat, mixed with a tear over our former deficiencies, may serve as wine and oil for their cure; we may so secure our true vocation, and make up for or rectify a doubtful calling.

"As far as *want of talents* is concerned, it is a sure remedy against vain glory, allows truth to shine in a stronger light, and vindicates the power and wisdom of Him in whose name the missionary works. Great talents were not the main supply of the twelve first founders of catholicity; even now-a-days, they do not work miracles in the apostolical calling; a true vocation, zeal, humility, and the thorough practice of the virtues of our state, are no less fit instruments in the hands of the promoter of the Gospel. Are talents a real necessity? If so, it becomes my duty to resign immediately my charge, which I accepted without talents; for, willing or not, I am forced to acknowledge that I have none, and, what is more, I ask for none if it is the will of God that I remain without any.

"Allow me to notice one more objection, upon which many seem to lay great stress. They apprehend that, in those American regions, our holy religion is in danger of meeting, some day or other, and perhaps very soon, the same difficulties and persecutions, under the pressure of

which it has been sighing at home. I can not foresee what God, in the secret of his judgments, will allow. I know, however, that the church militant has to follow up her victories unto the utmost boundaries of the earth; and that wherever she is attacked, she enters upon the task without fear for the future, under the shadow of the cross of Him who is with her and protects her. Or do those friends claim for our holy religion a peace that should never be interfered with? What, then, would become of the many promises which her Founder left her by his last will as so many legacies and codicils? Moreover, granting that our holy church will soon be persecuted in America, would our numerous catholics be less in want of priests; or would the priest be less bound to stand by them under such difficult circumstances? But, they retort, were such a thing to happen, it would be impossible to work! . . . The answer is obvious. For hundreds of years, the enemies of the early church left no means untried to interfere with the priests' work: modern heresies and apostasies have improved upon these vexations of olden times; we ourselves have seen preferment given to those who were most successful in thwarting the priests' ministry. Did God abandon his church in the midst of all those inimical schemes? No! *Veritas Domini manet in æternum*, 'the truth of the Lord remaineth forever!' That there are and always will be difficulties to contend with in the missions, I know by experi-

ence; in fact, they are so many and great, that I persist hopefully in doing all I can to bring others, who can cope with them better than I can myself, to join me. But, to speak of the present state of affairs in America, I do know this much, that our holy religion is nowhere less interfered with than there. We write to Rome and receive rescripts from the Eternal City without any body daring to touch or look at the papers, of whatever description they may be. We have public processions and celebrations; we wear religious regalia and ornament streets; we give the sacraments or refuse them; we perform burials or refuse that sacred rite; we admit converts to the church or reject public sinners; we forgive or impose public penances of all kinds; we build convents, erect schools, buy and sell lands, etc., etc., without any body interfering or pretending a right to interfere but our Bishop. We write, we speak, we preach what and where we please. In vain would the enemies of the church enter complaint against us in civil courts; the law is deaf in religious matters. We are free from spies and informers, who are neither paid nor encouraged to do their dirty work as they are at home. Who can wish for greater liberty? But how long will it last? Perhaps as long as we will, and here end our duties. This government will and must experience the general vicissitudes of all others; the rise and fall of kingdoms, like that of families, cities, and countries,

will go on until the end of time; but our rule of action must be in keeping with the times we live in, and for that alone we stand responsible. God wants neither our advice nor our help to adjust the future.

"It is hardly necessary to answer further objections; the poorest of intellects can overthrow them all. I only wish I met with as much good will and determination as ability!

"Poor me! I have then to leave again Europe, or at least the Netherlands, without a single companion; and, for a little while longer, work to the best of my poor abilities in a small corner of the vineyard of the Lord! I have to carry to my and your brothers of these regions, the cruel tidings that they are left to die of spiritual starvation; that thousands of their kin are doomed to be of the innumerable crowd upon which an eternal and unquenching fire will prey and exhaust its rage! And if these poor people ask me, whether there was no one among my countrymen, so famous for piety and zeal, who could or would extend a helping hand to preserve them from that direful evil, what shall I answer? Alas! acknowledge that no one would, is hard and shameful; assert that no one could, is neither true nor credible. But what if the Master of the Vineyard asks me and urges me: 'Why are you alone? Why no one with you? Why have I only such a good for nothing servant as you are? Where are they whom I have enriched with adequate talents, whom I have

prepared for the noble and difficult work of this the abandoned part of my vineyard by lengthy instructions, unusual trials, and experience? Did they forget the covenant which they renewed so often, of consecrating themselves entirely to me as I belong entirely to them? Do they pretend to love me only with the lips when I nourish, console, and satiate them; to refuse me even one drop of sweat, when they sacrifice so lavishly my life-blood and make me die a thousand deaths? Or do they not know the abandonment that oppresses me, afflicted as I am by the sight of thousands who are ruthlessly taken away from me to be buried in a sea of misery, and to load me for all eternity with injuries and blasphemies?' Again, what can I answer to the Lord? Oh! that I were a Francis Xavier! I would fill our limitless wilderness with howls and shrieks, I would sprinkle the earth with bloody tears, I would unceasingly strike my breast, and in my anguish make known to God himself my complaints, expecting, drowned in sorrow, some consolation from on high! . . .

"But I forget myself. I only intended to write a short letter as a long farewell. I beg your pardon, dear friends; it costs me too much to dismiss this matter, when I picture to my mind that awful day when those miserable people will stand in throngs to the left with the scum of the damned, perhaps, in their despair, accusing between their sobs and gnashing of teeth these anointed of the Lord, who now re-

fuse their help without sufficient reason, and laying at their door their everlasting misery and privation of eternal happiness! Ah! would to God that my but too just complaints had some effect upon half a dozen of commiserating hearts!

"I had conceived the idea of an undertaking which would have fostered missionary zeal in our land, viz: the establishment of a missionary institute which would have a house here and one in America. But I see no chance of success. I intend to lay before you its objects, location, and means of support, in fact the whole plan, so soon as circumstances favor the project. The society would be composed of young men from the different seminaries, and other priests volunteering, to the number, say, of ten or twenty, who would undertake missionary work for a period of eight or twelve years, alternately on the home and foreign missions. This plan might prove acceptable to such as would be willing to exercise this most difficult ministry not for a lifetime, but for a limited period.

"Obliged to forego for a time these most pleasing hopes, I will now turn my energies to smaller means of good, which, however insignificant, may perhaps prove useful. If, however, some few, touched by the grace of God, desired to devote themselves to the foreign missions, after I am gone; persons will be found in different Belgian cities, in Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent, Mechlin, Bruges, Thienen, Dendermonde, Ni-

nove, and especially in Louvain, who will give them full directions, and tell them how and where to address themselves in America to make known their intention. Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and Boston are the most important seaports to which communications may be forwarded. We of Kentucky have few commercial relations with Boston, more with Philadelphia, but especially with Baltimore. The latter port would prove the best landing for persons and luggage, as all necessary information and further directions may be had from the Archbishop or at the Seminary. Traveling and freight expenses are heavy. The three gentlemen who left Antwerp last May, had to pay fifty crowns for the trip in the captain's cabin, which is twice as expensive as it used to be. Amsterdam affords more and better opportunities to go to Baltimore, and I think that from that port a person could reach Kentucky at an outlay of a thousand of our guilders, no untoward circumstances increasing the expenses. Of course, he who comes must have good testimonial letters from his Bishop. But passports are unnecessary in America, where you meet with far less trouble on your travels than here. I did not meet with as much incivility, during my eleven years' stay in America, as I had to endure in the public conveyances of these Netherlands on two short journeys from one city to another. In America, people respect one another and behave like gentlemen; loose con-

versations and blasphemies are only indulged in by blackguards and the low-bred, as they are called.* Never could I have believed that public morality could have been lowered to such a degree of corruption in our Netherlands.

"The distance from Antwerp or Amsterdam to the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay is about three thousand five hundred miles; the bay, from its mouth to Baltimore, measures one hundred and sixty miles; another journey of seven hundred miles, by Pittsburg, brings you to Kentucky, where we reside. Now-a-days good inns and relays are to be found all along the road. In favorable weather, Kentucky may be reached in less than three months; but it takes sometimes four, five, and six months. Spring is the most favorable time of the year. As a remedy against sea-sickness, and most conducive to health, I advise a cathartic before going to sea; have also a small supply of wine, lemons, etc. Lemons and vinegar tea I find best against that very annoying but seldom dangerous disease—sea-sickness. Also take a supply of fish for abstinence days, and make a special contract with the captain to have it prepared for you; butter is also seldom to be had on board. Life on the ship is hard, tiresome, and disagreeable. I generally keep on deck, whenever practicable, and have some books to pass the time more pleasantly. I would also advise you to have a good supply of linen; frequent change of rai-

* O tempora, O mores!

ment will protect you against that plague of ships, vermin, which powders and salves will more effectually keep away from you.

"Those who can not help us with their person or substance are earnestly requested to give us at least the help of their prayers, good works, and sacrifices; this was, in former times, the way religious, who also offered themselves for the work, acted. The great Francis Xavier refers the fruit of his labors to the prayers, etc., of others; and, if it is not out of place to speak of myself, I am not afraid to assert that I obtained most signal benefits from the Rosary Society of little children. It is made up of children who are not over seven years of age, and have, in consequence, because of their baptismal innocence, retained the right to be heard. I enrolled in it more than five hundred children, who daily prostrate themselves before the throne of God to implore his mercy. Of the aim and manner of that devotion, I intend to treat elsewhere. . . . Let some pious souls here in the Netherlands club together in a similar manner, or, if they desire to unite themselves with us and practice this devotion as it is done in our regions, suffice it to know that the main object of our devotion is Jesus dying and His sorrowing Mother at the foot of the cross. Our new little convent of Loretto is so partial to that devotion, that, although the sisters and scholars keep silence the whole day with the exception of half an hour after dinner, they all assemble

in spirit at the foot of the cross every half-hour of the day until bed-time, and to the aspiration of the leader, '*O Suffering Jesus!*' all the others answer, '*O Sorrowful Mary!*' The devotions to the Suffering Jesus, to His Sacred Heart, to Mary his Blessed Mother, are the choicest of our our religion. Our faith began with the preaching of Jesus, and Him crucified; and it is likely that neglect of piety toward the sufferings of our Lord, is in no small degree the cause that, in our days, 'with desolation is all land made desolate.' Ah! if every priest and minister of the Gospel with his parishioners, masters, and mistresses with their pupils, fathers and mothers with their household, only seriously meditated half an hour in the week on the sufferings which the Son of God so willingly underwent for our sake, how deep would not that dying Redeemer be imprinted in the hearts of all these good christians! Could it then be possible that our great God, how much soever displeased, would reject any of us, if the image of Him, in whom he takes all his delight, were stamped on the soul of the afflicted sinner who loudly prays for perseverance in virtue and for deliverance from evil? I recommend, then, this devotion to all my relations, for the preservation of the Holy Roman Catholic Religion in their families. And let me also add the further advice, which I myself always tried to practice, to cling steadfastly to the Head of the church—the Pope of Rome; to accept his decisions as the words of Him whose

place he fills, notwithstanding all the subterfuges which cunning or ill-will may invent. There never sprung up an error or heresy of which the Pope was the head; never will there be true faith where the Pope is not at the head. A prayer for the Pope should be among our daily practices.

"Rendering now heartfelt thanks to all my relations, to all my esteemed friends and acquaintances, for their kind reception, for favors and benefits received, either through personal affection or because of my mission, I bid them an affectionate farewell, leaving them my wishes for the choicest blessings of heaven upon them all, and for their perfect prosperity in time and eternity. With the help of God's grace, I will carry with me across the Atlantic ocean and through the States of Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Ohio, the remembrance of your virtues and kind deeds down to Kentucky, there to be set down as examples worthy of imitation for all future times and generations. Long rest and greater prosperity to my native land! A long farewell! Dear friends, I embrace you all in the Sacred Heart of Jesus! . . . Farewell! until we meet in the valley of Josaphat! Farewell!

"CHARLES NERINCKX,
"*Miss. Apost.*

"P. S. The date of my departure for America being very uncertain, it depending on many

at present doubtful circumstances, I request the men or women who foster in their hearts the desire of devoting themselves, either for a time or for their whole life, to the noble undertaking, to think seriously on the matter, to recommend it earnestly to God, and to come to a speedy conclusion. Supposing, a thing most probable, that I do not leave before winter, they should keep themselves in readiness to leave early in the spring. Those who desire to confer with me on the subject, and to receive reliable information, can apply at the residence of any of my relations, among whom I constantly reside, or write to my home in Ninove, whence I will answer their letters.

"My reverend brother, who has care of souls in Somerstown, London, and who, by request of his Bishop, spent a few days in the Netherlands to obtain laborers for the abandoned missions of the Cape of Good Hope and the island of Grenada, has gone back to his people without obtaining the desired help. He requests me to post those whom a desire to devote themselves to the noble undertaking would urge to go, in the manner of reaching their destination. It is unnecessary to repeat that the twenty thousand catholics of Grenada, deprived of a priest for the last fifteen months, have signified to the Bishop of London their desire of having one; that the government is ready to pay all traveling expenses; that the mission is possessed of a church

and able to support a priest; that the predominant language is French; etc., etc.

"I am just now informed that, besides these two missions, a third one stands in need of help—the Isle of France, having a population of thirty thousand souls and but one priest. Oh! my dear friends, let us not look with indifference on the lamentable position of these our brethren; consider the numerous progeny that is going to share in their abandonment. If no one hastens to their help, the sectarians, anti-catholics, etc., will soon go to pervert this portion of Christ's fold! If I can be of any use, I am ready to give all necessary information."

We deem comments unnecessary. As a result of this moving appeal, two priests and eight young men, four of whom were ready to be ordained, signified their willingness to accompany Father Nerinckx to America.

Our missionary spent the winter in collecting money, vestments, paintings, and other articles necessary for or useful to the missions. During his stay he also put in order and had printed in French, the "Rules and Statutes of the Little Society of the Friends of Mary at the foot of the Cross," which had been adopted by the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda, when taking that society under its especial protection, in April, 1816. Father Nerinckx gave these copies for circulation among the pious sodalities of

women in Belgium, with an eye to gain some postulants for the incipient society, as also to excite the zeal of those who had pecuniary means to dispose of in favor of good works like the one he commended to their charity.

CHAPTER XX.

1817.

Father Nerinckx' return to America.—Dutch laws.—Emigration.—Father Nerinckx and companions embark for the New World.—Tempests and pirates.—Arrival in Maryland.—His associates join the Jesuits.

Father Nerinckx left Mechlin about Easter of 1817, delayed a fortnight longer in Antwerp, and proceeded thence to Amsterdam, where his companions, eight young men and two Flemish priests whose services he had succeeded in enlisting in the cause of the American missions, soon joined him. One of them, however, came very near being left. Full of zeal and happy to devote his life to so noble a work, the young man had made no secret of his intentions. Unacquainted with the red-tape formalities to which government officials delight to subject those who are unfortunate enough to stand in need of their services, the open-hearted youth was rather alarmed at his first experience with the outer world. As he pondered over the document which was laid before him at the passport office of Antwerp, he, who was innocent and without guile, understood, no doubt, as he

had never done before, the wisdom of the lesson which Christ gave to his apostles when sending them out to preach his Gospel among men: "Be ye, therefore, wise as serpents, and simple as doves. But beware of men! . . ." Under so strikingly similar circumstances, a new light broke upon his mind, "and it was given to him in that hour what to speak," and how to evade the provisions of the ominous prohibition paper. Its contents were to the effect, that no person could leave the mother country and travel abroad or emigrate to foreign parts, firstly if, being a minor, his parents were opposed to his departure; secondly, if he had not complied with the national law of military conscription; thirdly, and this was the main objectional clause of the document, if they left with the intention of devoting themselves to the foreign missions. The reason given for this arbitrary prohibition was, that the secretary of public worship (and a protestant at that!) stood in need of their services in their native land!

Such were the iniquitous means by which a bigoted government sought to entrammel the extension of the catholic faith, and the exercise of the individual liberty of its catholic subjects. No wonder if such a course of action proved in the end disastrous to the Dutch supremacy, and blasted the hopes entertained by the allied powers of ever effecting the lasting amalgamation of Holland and Belgium. Inflated by his late successes, Prince William Frederic of

Orange Nassau looked upon the Belgian provinces, ceded to him in 1815, as the spoils of victory. Instead of trying to conciliate his catholic subjects, who would have been loyal citizens of the kingdom of the Netherlands and devoted friends to the Orange dynasty after the galling experience of a twenty-five years' French tyrannical protection, he did all in his power to alienate their affections. And he succeeded so well that a revolution broke out in 1830, and Catholic Belgium proclaimed and successfully maintained its hard-earned independence.

Father Nerinckx had not been without apprehension on that score, and communicated his fears to Bishop Flaget, for he could not but be aware that his movements were being watched by the officials. On December 20, 1816, he wrote to Archbishop Neale, of Baltimore: "I intend to set out for America next March, and hope, with the divine protection, to meet your Lordship in good health within a few months. I am not without misgivings about the success of my mission here, for, to the embarrassments caused by the government, must be added the probability of war and the increasing number of privateers who cover the seas." However, the Flemish youth in question secured his passport and joined the little band of missionaries in Amsterdam, where he relieved, at times, the tedious days of a whole month's delay at that post, by the zest with which he related to his

companions his experience with Dutch custom-house officers.

Whilst here, our friends became greatly interested in the subject of European emigration. Hundreds of families of all nationalities had gathered in Amsterdam awaiting their chance of embarking for America. In their daily peregrinations along the docks, watching a favorable opportunity to set sail, the missionaries could examine at leisure into the causes of that uninterrupted exodus which has been taking such formidable proportions ever since. During the ten years previous to 1817, extensive emigration had been precluded by the unfriendly relations existing at the time between Great Britain, France, and the United States; but soon after the restoration of peace, a new impulse was given to it, and during the year 1817, over twenty thousand immigrants arrived in the States. The extravagant wars of Napoleon I. had impoverished France, and had brought Alsace and Lorraine to so abject a state of misery, by his long-continued taxations of friends and foes, that the poor emigrants from those provinces testified to Father Nerinckx that their only object in leaving their homes was to find a crust of bread for their wives and children. The restoration of 1815 had not even succeeded in giving temporary relief to the devastated provinces; and, after two years of struggle for existence, love of country was stifled

within the breasts of the sufferers by the craving pangs of hunger.

However, most of the emigrants congregated at the port of Amsterdam were Germans, who went to seek, in a foreign land, the political and religious liberty which was denied them at home. Subsequent to the fall of the Napoleonic Empire and the re-establishment of the independence of German nationality, a confederation of all the States which had contrived to maintain their sovereignty during those troublesome times, had been formed in June, 1815, and had given great hopes to the people. But "the enthusiastic hope of the German people that Germany would once more appear as a powerful united nation was sorely disappointed. No national representation was to give stability, upon a popular basis, to the confederation. The Diet being only a temporary convention of the representatives of princes, all jealous of their individual sovereignty and unwilling to recognize the claims of the people, became an abject tool of political oppression. . . . Wherever the people of a single State endeavored to obtain free institutions, the Diet found occasion to interfere in favor of absolute monarchical power."* Princes forgot that absolute monarchism had had its time, and that a new order of things had begun; a new light had dawned upon the people—an era of representative legislation and constitutional government. The consequence

* New American Cyclopædia, Vol. VIII., pg. 210.

of that error was soon apparent. With the natural tardiness inherent to their race, the Germans gave the authorities time to reflect: and when it became a settled fact that justice would not be done to the people, they set about their work with the no less natural tenacity of purpose which knows no obstacles. In 1817 began that steady emigration, which has increased every year in proportion as it has been opposed, and which, in our own day, not even Prince Bismarck's despotic regulations have been able to check.

A month had elapsed since his arrival in the Dutch seaport, when Father Nerinckx succeeded, at length, in securing passage for himself and companions on board the brig *Mars*, Captain Hall, a Quaker of Baltimore. For the consideration of four hundred Dutch guilders, the captain gave up his cabin for their exclusive use, to the great joy of the missionaries, who were anxious to perform their devotions in common. There being room for only seven occupants, the three others went in quest of lodgings among the one hundred and thirty Alsatian and German emigrants who completed the list of passengers, and joined their brethren in the spiritual exercises during the day.

Having left Amsterdam the 8th of May, 1817, they embarked on the brig the 16th of the same month, at the island of Texel. The voyage was long and dangerous. Scarcely had they en-

tered the English channel, when, on Whitsunday, a storm arose, and heightened the danger usually attending the passage of those straits. The most strenuous efforts of the crew seemed unavailing, and one of the sailors who was clinging to the rigging, in order to save the canvas, was dashed, with the sails from the topmast, overboard and lost. During that violent storm, James O. Vandevelde, one of Father Nerinckx' companions, was thrown down on deck with such force as to break a blood-vessel, suffered much during the journey, and was so enfeebled from the loss of blood that on landing in Baltimore he had to be carried to St. Mary's Seminary. Tossed by the winds and waves, the ship floated about for three days and three nights without sails and without a helm, at the mercy of the ocean, to the great consternation of the passengers, most of whom never had been to sea before. However, the tempest finally subsided; the vessel was put in good trim; and our friends, unconscious of further danger, submitted themselves with rather ill-grace to that unmerciful sea complaint, to which all novices have to pay tribute, and against which poor Father Nerinckx struggled with any thing but success for a whole month.

In the meantime, the *Mars*, manned by willing hands, but steered by incompetent heads, made little headway; neither the captain nor the mate was qualified for his post, and, misguided by their ever-varying calculations, the

brig after passing the Azores was making straight for the tropics. Having at length discovered his mistake, Captain Hall headed northwest for the banks of New Foundland, and was complimenting himself on his unmerited escape from the disastrous consequences which his random sailing might have brought upon him, when, as ill luck would have it, he fell in with a privateer. The *Mars* was soon running before the wind with all the canvas which our Quaker could muster; but the piratical vessel, rigged for such emergencies, soon gave her a smart chase; and, after a long pursuit, succeeded in boarding her to the dismay of the poor emigrants, who, expecting to be hurled overboard after having escaped so many dangers, gave way to mournful lamentations for ever having left the land of their birth. However, their fears proved to be groundless. Captain Mooney, the master of the pirate, was a native of Baltimore, and having expressed his satisfaction at meeting a countryman, far from manifesting any hostile intentions, he offered to revictual the *Mars*, which, having lost so much time by steering out of her course, was failing in provisions. Captain Hall thankfully accepted the proferred help; he bought several barrels of biscuit, salt beef, some tuns of fresh water, and a great quantity of dried fruits and wine, which the pirate had in abundance, having plundered, three days before, a Spanish merchant-ship on its way to Spain, and out of which the shrewd Marylander intended to make

an honest penny. Incompetency as a mariner did not prevent the captain's being a ready-witted business man, as all Americans to the manor born. Truly,

> Except wind stands as it never stood,
> It is an ill wind that turns none to good!

Every thing now seemed merry as a marriage bell, and our gallant captain went on his way rejoicing, and with, perhaps, more than *three sheets in the wind*, when, one fine morning, the vessel ran upon the dangerous shores of northern Long Island, and sprang a leak! The *Mars* took water so fast, that had it not been for the German and Alsatian emigrants' strong arms, and the self-sacrificing help of the venerable missionaries, she would surely have perished. Passengers and crew were for three weeks, night and day without interruption, at the pumps; and even then the least storm would have proved fatal. But Providence watched over Father Nerinckx and his generous companions, and brought them safe into Chesapeake Bay after an eventful passage of eighty days.* They landed

* Letters of Father Nerinckx, edited by J. Lesage Ten Broeck. This editor of the Femish relation remarks that "one thousand eight hundred immigrants entered on the same day different ports of the Union, among them the well-known French exile, General Vandamme." He remained in the United States until 1824, when he returned to Cassel, his birthplace, where he died, July 15, 1830. "A great many Frenchmen had already emigrated to the States, and were projecting the foundation of a city on the banks of the Ohio, the name of which would be worthy of its inhabitants." He refers, no doubt, to Gallipolis. "So far back as the year 1790, contemporaneous with the erec-

in Baltimore on the feast of St. Martha, July 29, 1817.

Having arrived in Maryland in the hottest season of the year, the missionaries soon experienced the unhealthy influence of so great a change of climate, and they would have proved a great burden to Father Nerinckx, had it not been for the kind interference of the pastor of St. Patrick's,* a Frenchman and an intimate friend of his, who obtained lodgings for all of them in the Sulpitian College. They were, however, loath to tax the generous hospitality of the Sul-

tion of the See of Baltimore (1789), the erection of an Episcopal See at the obscure and out-of-the-way town of Gallipolis, in Scioto county, Ohio, was very seriously contemplated in Rome, through French influence. It is related, as a reason for this, that shortly before this period a colony of French Catholics, numbering about seven thousand, had settled on a large tract of land, purchased for them in this region by the French Land Company. This settlement was called Gallipolis. The project went so far as the nomination of a Bishop, and M. L'Abbé Boisnantier, a canon of St. Denis, Paris, was appointed Bishop of Gallipolis. This design was abandoned, however, owing to the failure of the Scioto colony, the title of whose land was not clear, and the colonists finding that they had been imposed upon, returned to their native land. When, in 1793, Fathers Badin and Barrieres went West, they found but a remnant of the little settlement which had long been destitute of the ministrations of a priest. These two missionaries remained here for a few days, heard confessions, offered up the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for these delighted people, and baptized some forty children." N. Y. Freeman's Journal, May 25, 1878. These reverend gentlemen were on their way to Kentucky; that was the first time that Mass was said within the limits of the State of Ohio.

Of late years Gallipolis was attended from Jackson, Ohio. Right Rev. S. H. Rosecrans, Bishop of Columbus, appointed Rev. J. B. Gamber resident pastor of the place in 1878.

* Probably, Father de Moranville.

pitian Fathers too long; the more so, as with the exception of one, they had all resolved to join the Society of Jesus. In consequence, Henry Hendrickx, of Hougaerde, near Thienen,* remained with Father Nerinckx, and the nine others soon set out for the Jesuit College of Georgetown, where eight of them at once entered the Novitiate. The ninth one, whose name I could not ascertain, having, upon mature deliberation, come to the conclusion that he had no vocation for the Order, withdrew.

Father Nerinckx was strongly attached to the Society of Jesus, and on every possible occasion gave proof of the high esteem in which he held it; indeed, the height of his ambition, whilst in Rome, had been to join it himself. In bringing so many young men with him, he mainly complied with the request of Father Anthony Kohlman, the Provincial of the Jesuits in Maryland, who had begged of him to obtain, if possible, young men disposed to labor on the American mission. Forgetful of his own needs, and of the sad neglect of the poor diocese of Bardstown, he cheerfully sent those robust laborers where he thought they would do the most good; notwithstanding the fact that he had written so many letters complaining of the dearth of priests in his own missions, and the imperious necessity in which he was of securing help. The venerable B. J. Flaget, Bishop of Bardstown, gave him, at his arrival in that city, a

* In French: Tirlemont, province of Brabant, Belgium.

gentle rebuke for his too self-denying disinterestedness, saying: "Father Nerinckx, why did you not bring some of those good Flemish priests along with you? There are excellent subjects among them, able to fill any position; I like them very much."

The eight who joined the Jesuits at Georgetown were the following:

1. Mr. Cousin, a priest of the diocese of Ghent; he died at White Marsh, at the close of his novitiate.

2. Rev. P. Devos, also a priest of Flanders, born in 1782. He was a very pious man; but, finding that his settled habits of solitary independence rendered him unfit for community life, he left the Society of Jesus in 1819, and Archbishop Carroll appointed him pastor of St. Mary's church, Rockville, Montgomery county, Maryland, about fifteen miles from Georgetown.

Mr. Lemuel Clements, a venerable old resident of Rockville, has a vivid recollection of these old pioneer times. His eyes moisten and his tongue grows eloquent when he speaks of his old friend and pastor; and, as you listen to his account of days gone by, you can not but think that it must have been a virtue of no common order which could stamp its impress so deeply on even one follower. Mr. Clements furnished us the following details, in 1877: "The church in Rockville was built with a steeple or tower at the rear, the lower part of which was used as a sacristy. Father Devos lived in the upper

room for two years. In 1821, I moved him from the steeple up to my house, on the Wharton farm, near where St. Rose's church now stands. He lived with me four years. I gave him my best room, which he converted into a chapel where he said Mass regularly. At this time he had charge of the whole county. He said Mass at Barnesville, Rockville, and St. John's. When he made an appointment for Mass, he never allowed any thing to disappoint his people. On one occasion he was going to Barnesville, on a very cold day, and found the Branches with more or less ice in them. When he reached Little Seneca, his horse refused to head the ice; and, being rather a poor horseman, although he always traveled on horseback, he dismounted, walked through the water, and made the horse follow him. A heavy cold, which eventually proved the cause of his death, was the result.

"He never stayed away from his charge even for one night, and being in the habit of going to Georgetown to confession, he would never remain there over night until commanded to do so by the Archbishop. During the twenty-five years he was in Montgomery county, he visited Baltimore only once.

"He became infirm several years before he left the county, and was not able to attend to the duties of the mission. In January, 1844, I moved him to Georgetown. He thence went to his friend, Rev. Edward Knight, pastor of St. Peter's

Church, Capitol Hill, Washington, and died there in March, 1844. He was attended in his last sickness by Father James B. Donelan, who told me that the almost unbearable stench in his room previous to his death, was changed to a sweet fragrance so soon as he died."

The testimony of Rev. Father Van Horsigh, then residing at St. Peter's, corroborates the latter statement, He told Rev. James A. Ward, S. J., now of the novitiate, Frederic, Md., that after death the body of Father Devos exhaled a most extraordinary and delicious perfume.

3. Mr. James Oliver Vandevelde, of Lebbeke, near Dendermonde, was professor in the *Petit Seminaire* of Mechlin, when Providence threw "in his way, . . . one of the most celebrated missionaries of the New World. This was Father Charles Nerinckx of Kentucky, who had been to Rome in the interest of our Western missions, and especially those of Kentucky, and who, on his return, visited Mechlin. Young Vandevelde was not slow in seeking this saintly man and pioneer missionary, who imparted to him full information on the American missions, their necessities, want of laborers, and of the abundant fruits they produced; and the young follower of the Cross disclosed in turn his fixed purpose of devoting himself to so glorious a work. His self-offering was accepted, and it was arranged that he should accompany Father Nerinckx to America, complete his theologies studies at Bishop Flaget's Seminary at Bardstown, Ken-

tucky, and then devote his life to the labors of the missions." * On his arrival in America, however, he made up his mind to join the Jesuits. First, professor at Georgetown College; afterward on the mission in Montgomery county, Maryland; successively professor, vice-president, and procurator of the St. Louis University, Mo., and finally president of the same institution, Father Vandevelde filled the duties of his several positions with more than ordinary ability. He was subsequently sent as representative of the Vice-Province of Missouri to the congregation of procurators of the society which assembled in Rome in 1841, was made Vice-Provincial of the Missouri province in 1843, consecrated Bishop of Chicago in 1849, and at his own request transferred to Natchez in 1853. He died in the latter city, November 13, 1855, from the effects of a fall down the stairway, having fractured his leg in two places.

4. Father Henry Verheyen, of Merxplas, had made the Spanish campaign under Napoleon. He became a missionary in Maryland, and died at St. Thomas' Manor, Port Tobacco, Charles county, of bilious fever, September 30, 1823, at the age of thirty-six years. His great zeal for the salvation of souls and his solid virtue gained for him the esteem and respect of all those who were happy enough to know him.

5. Mr. Peter Joseph Timmermans, of Turnhout, was secretary to the commissary of that

* Lives of Deceased Bishops, by Richard H. Clarke.

district, when he joined the little band of missionaries in 1817. He became an indefatigable missionary, and together with Father Vanquickenborne, his *Socius*, rendered great services to religion in Missouri. He finished his earthly career at St. Stanislaus, Florissant, Missouri, May 31, 1824, aged thirty-four, after a few hours' illness.

6. Mr. Strahan, from near Turnhout, province of Antwerp. He accompanied the former to Missouri as a lay brother, and left the society soon after.

The two others had come out with the intention of rendering themselves useful as lay brothers in the pioneer missions of the Society of Jesus. They were:

7. Brother Christian Desmet, born in Marcke, near Audenaerde, January 24, 1771, who died at the College of Georgetown, D. C., March 29, 1845, after having been a model of a true and holy religious in his twofold employment of baker and sacristan.

8. Brother Peter De Mêyer, of Segelsem, the only survivor of the party, who is enjoying a green old age of eighty-four years, at St. Stanislaus Novitiate, near Florissant, Missouri.

CHAPTER XXI.

1817.

FATHER NERINCKX' VARIOUS IMPORTATIONS.—MR. HENDRICKX GOES TO NEW ORLEANS.—HIS DEATH.—FATHER NERINCKX' LOVE OF THE BEAUTY OF THE HOUSE OF GOD.—HE SUPPLIES CHURCHES AND CONVENTS WITH ECCLESIASTICAL ORNAMENTS.—THE GIFT OF THE POOR SERVANT GIRL.—CELEBRATED PAINTINGS.

IN this age of railroad and steamboat facilities, it is as difficult to conceive the amount of trouble and expense which the bulky baggage of our missionaries of old entailed upon them, as it would be preposterous in our own times to bring from the mother country the numerous articles of church furniture, pictures, bells, altars, etc., which they procured for their poor churches and lonely stations in those primitive days.

In these United States, as everywhere else, the catholic priest was the pioneer of christian civilization. This is especially true of Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, and neighboring States. The picture of Kentucky, as drawn in a previous chapter, makes it nothing short of a desert for any civilized being. And from a letter of the venerable Father Nerinckx, written in 1807, we gather a list of articles which this val-

iant soldier of the Cross thought fit to import for the spiritual and temporal welfare of his flock. "I asked you for seeds of different kinds of trees, shrubbery, and fruits. Please notice in packing them that you must allow them sufficient air, and not press them too much, so that they be not killed or rotten. Although we are not entirely without church furniture, our wants are great indeed; missals, crucifixes, statues, and pictures are most needed. Not one of our churches has what may be called an altar except Holy Cross; none has more than *one* chasuble; nor is a linen alb to be found in any of these which I did not furnish myself. Middling good linen, which we get from Ireland, costs $1.50. I also procured four chalices. . . . Music books are another article that I very much desire. . . . Being constantly occupied in building churches and altars, I wish we could obtain books and pictures from Belgium, in order to give our workmen here some good models and sketches. I desire you to send me a good edition of Gestel, Sanderus, etc., along with the other books I ordered. . . . Also send me some more salves, with explanation of their virtues and directions for use. The salves which I brought from the Hospital of Dendermonde, were used with good results, not for myself, thank God! but to cure a negro boy who was badly burned. . . ."

Builder and architect, the good Father made churches loom up in the wilderness, and established missions, around which the hardy border-

pioneer reared his log hut and reclaimed the forest to civilization. Spiritual doctor, who guarded the soul against the dangers of a life in the wilderness and poured a healing balsam in many a prurient wound, he was also ready to go to the relief of the corporal infirmities of his flock and procure them remedies which the distance from populous centers would have precluded them from getting in time. Attentive to their every want, he brought them church ornaments to lend a charm, and a, till then, unknown splendor to the celebration of the holy mysteries, as also fruits and flowers with which to adorn their gardens and enrich their orchards, beautifying their homes and making them renounce their oft repeated wanderings, to settle contentedly under the shadow of the cross which surmounted the rustic sanctuary.

Father Nerinckx had learned by experience how useful all these things were, and unmindful of the cost, trouble, and annoyance attending the transportation of huge trunks at so great a distance, he returned to his mission with a full supply of articles of every description. He paid two hundred Dutch guilders for ship-transit, and, by special favor, only $240 for internal revenue, although the church goods used to enter the States free of charge. In a letter, addressed in 1818 to his Belgian benefactors and giving an account of his many expenses, he says that every passenger has to fill up a lading-bill, stating the price and giving a description of the

articles imported, and swear to their true value. "By neglecting to comply with these requirements, the Italian and French priests who arrived before me," (probably Very Rev. De Andreis, C. M., and companions, who reached America in July, 1816,) "had to see all their things unpacked, and valued piecemeal. The Right Rev. W. Dubourg, Bishop of Louisiana, who came shortly after my arrival with a numerous suite, having more experience and friends, went to the head of the Department, and succeeded in passing all his luggage without almost any expense, under the title of church apparatus. Those who would, at present, come by New Orleans, have nothing to pay, that city having been declared a free port of entry for a term of five years, of which the current year is the second."

On his arrival in Baltimore the goods were found to be in a good state of preservation, and in order to profit by the franchise of New Orleans and at the same time to avoid the enormous cost of transportation by land, Father Nerinckx advised Mr. Hendrickx, who had up to this time remained with him, to go by sea to New Orleans, and take part of the baggage with him. Unhappily, the young man experienced a very rough sea, which damaged the goods considerably, and it was only after a stormy passage of fifty days, three times the duration of an ordinary voyage, that he arrived safe at his destination, where he was kindly received by the Vicar-general, the Superior of the Ursulines. Strong

and healthy as he was, Henry Hendrickx was the only one whom sea-sickness had not affected during the lengthy voyage from Europe; but on the second day of his arrival in New Orleans, he caught the yellow fever, which was just then raging in that city, and, notwithstanding the best of care given him by the sisters, he died a week after in the dwelling of the Vicar-general, who gave him the last religious rites of our Holy Mother the Church. His death was a great loss to the young diocese of Bardstown, which stood in great need of his talents, and to which he had intended to devote his life. The sickness and burial of young Hendrickx cost Father Nerinckx about $200; his passage and freight expenses amounted to $150, which, together with $50 pocket money that he had giv n him, brought the expenses of that trip to very near $400. How much more the baggage would cost him he could not state, for it had not yet reached him in December, 1818.

The transportation by land of Father Nerinckx' trunks was enough to frighten any body less energetic and less confident of God's providential help. The two hundred miles from Baltimore to Pittsburg cost him $7.50 a hundred pounds, viz: six hundred dollars for the eight thousand pounds' weight which he had kept with him. From Pittsburg he had a chance of having it conveyed by water on the Ohio down to Louisville, a distance of four hundred and fifty miles; the charges, however, amounted

even then to no less than $300. The remainder of the journey from Louisville to Loretto (sixty miles) cost him $1 to $2 a hundred.

At the time that Father Nerinckx was in Belgium selecting his choice collection of church ornaments, many a person, laboring under the false but too common idea that worn-out things are good enough for the missions, asked him what he intended to do with all those precious things in the wilderness of America? The answer is worthy of the zealous priest, who "loved the beauty of the house of the Lord:" "Let us believe," he writes in 1818, "that Christ, the King of Glory, is worthy of, and delights in, our tokens of the most profound veneration, in whatever place it may be. I think that the pious Belgians rejoice with us that the Holy Sacrifice, which used to be offered here (and is yet in some places) in chasubles of coarse tissue bordered with old bonnet ribbons, instead of silk and gold galoon, is now celebrated in many a mission, in silk, damask, and silver ornaments, to the glorification of the true God. Such things add to the splendor of the ceremonies of the church, and inspire the ignorant and lookers-on with a greater veneration for our religion; seeing, they admire; admiring, they inquire; inquiring, they finally desire the gift of faith, obtain it, and ever after love and practice the law of God." Lack of faith alone could account for the silly observations of the fault-finders; for

He who seeks the hundredth sheep lost in the American wilderness, is the same God who so tenderly cares for the ninety-nine others who are feasting on the rich pastures of catholic countries. The new-born Jesus, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger, received, in the stable of Bethlehem, the adoration of the three kings, who, opening their treasures, offered to him gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Compared to the many friends anxious to help in the propagation of the true faith in the New World, the fault-finders were few indeed. Through the noble generosity of those Belgian friends, Father Nerinckx was enabled to purchase some very rich ornaments, and neatly repair and improve chasubles of less value. An old and tried friend of the venerable missionary, Mr. Jos. Peemans, of Louvain, was especially instrumental in obtaining many valuable articles.

It may prove interesting to the congregations that are still in possession of some of these objects, to know where they came from and how they were obtained. The richest and most complete set of vestments, including fire copes of the finest material, was bought from a collegiate church in Brussels at a very high figure. Father Nerinckx donated it to the cathedral church of Bardstown, and Bishop Flaget used it for the first time at the Pontifical Mass of Easter Sunday in the chapel of St. Thomas Seminary, at which Very Rev. De Andreis and his Italian

and French companions assisted. Our missionary here remarks that the chapel being as large and as well-built as the one of the Seminary at Mechlin, the grandest ceremonies of the church could easily be performed therein, the only drawback being the substitution of an old pianoforte in lieu of the organ. The cathedral church was also presented with the beautiful bell of the abbey of Ninove, cast by Mr. Sacré, of Alost, and bought in Ninove by Father Nerinckx; with a very good organ, the first ever seen in Kentucky; and with a fine gilt remonstrance and ciborium.

The Seminary, which was sadly deficient in every thing, got a set of white vestments for four priests and black ones with cope, which Father Nerinckx had purchased in Mechlin; another white set, with blue columns and an embroidered cope, used for first class solemnities, the gift of Mr. Peemans, of Louvain; twenty chasubles of different colors and value, together with as many albs and other linen articles, and a small remonstrance.

The Dominican Fathers received, through Father Nerinckx, who had solicited aid for them from their friends in Bruges, Bornhem, and other cities where they were known, over thirty chasubles, some complete sets of vestments, among which a beautiful embroidered one, and a quantity of the very best Flemish linen, done up in albs, amices, etc.

Father Nerinckx also gave Rev. Badin, for

his several congregations, eight chasubles; four to Rev. Chabrat, etc., etc. To the then small convent of the Daughters of Charity, in Nazareth, he donated five chasubles and a remonstrance purchased in Mechlin. The churches of St. Charles and St. Mary's got each three chasubles, linen, a chalice, and a ciborium.

A sweet little bit of romance is attached to those two last named ciboriums that will enhance their value in the eyes of their happy owners. Father Nerinckx having staid over night with a pastor in Flanders, could not help noticing the profound veneration which the old servant-girl entertained for him. He was so much pleased with her solid piety and humble faith, that, notwithstanding his poverty, he resolved to give her, before leaving, a little gratuity, not so much as a return for her kind services as a memento of the missionary priest. But before he had time to do so, the poor girl had slipped a little paper into his hand with so much dexterity that none of the persons present noticed it. When he afterward examined the paper, he was not a little surprised to find in it a guinea! Having had occasion to pay another visit to the same friend, he thanked her for her generosity, but insisted upon her taking back the gold coin. But the pious housekeeper told Father Nerinckx that her alms being given to the poor American missions, and not to him, he was not at liberty to refuse her gift. "When the Trappists left for America," she continued, "I gave

them a chalice, and I have now resolved that you also shall accept one from me;" and so saying, she handed the astonished priest one hundred guilders. In vain did he urge that she was poor; that she would be in need of it herself, if not now, surely later; that he did not like to accept so large a sum from a person in her circumstances, etc. She cut short his protestations by telling him that she had gained the money honestly, by working hard and spinning early and late, and that she was free to dispose of her little treasure as she had a mind to. The missionary had to accept it. Neither would she hear of thanks; like a true christian, "she laid up for herself treasures in heaven, where neither the rust nor the moth doth consume; and where thieves do not dig through nor steal."* Nor could he obtain her name; *Nelleken N——, ancilla, M. B.*, (Nellie N——, servant-girl, a great benefactress,) is the only title that recalls her memory to the grateful prayers of Loretto in the long list of Belgian benefactors. "When doing an alms deed, she did not sound a trumpet before her, . . . that she might be honored by men, . . . her left hand knew not what her right hand was doing."* Ah! how many a noble soul, now living in retirement and obscurity, will shine like the brightest gem in the light of God's justice at the last day, while ostentatious Pharisees will have received their reward in this world, and be covered with

* Matth. vi.

shame on the day of the great retribution! Father Nerinckx devoted the generous gift to the purchase of the two ciboriums alluded to, by adding a little mite of his own. May not we confidently hope that Jesus has long since introduced to the celestial mansions above, the charitable soul who procured him a decent receptacle here below?

To his convent of Loretto, Father Nerinckx gave three large bells, on which he had caused the motto of the society, "O Suffering Jesus! O Sorrowful Mary!" to be cast; a full set of white vestments, and an antependium embroidered in silver and gold; and a dress and mantle for the statue of the Blessed Virgin. These belonged to a community of Benedictine nuns, of whom Father Nerinckx bought them, and they constitute the *primæ classis* of the Mother-house of the Little Society of the Friends of Mary. The same house obtained, moreover, a full set of antique and very fine red vestments, partly donated by a benefactor of Liege; a cope bought out of Father Nerinckx' own scanty means; six or seven chasubles, among which a superb one presented by his friend Mr. Peemans, of Louvain; two chalices, a ciborium, a remonstrance, and a good supply of albs, church linen, beads, and pictures, which were given him in Belgium. Besides these donations, Father Nerinckx spent over three hundred francs for beads, pictures, etc., for his missions. He subsequently adorned the convent chapel of Calvary with the taber-

nacle purchased from the Recollet Fathers in Mechlin, and sent three chasubles, a chalice, and some altar linen for its use. His third foundation, Gethsemani, commenced in 1818, received a complete set of vestments and antependium, bought from an old abbey in the diocese of Liege; also a silver crucifix, some chasubles and linen, a chalice, ciborium, and remonstrance; most of these being the donation of some good souls for the first new house he would establish after his return. He placed in the chapel of that convent the tabernacle which used to adorn the altar of the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, in the Metropolitan church of St. Rumoldus, Mechlin (where he had been vicar, and first exercised the ministry), and a beautiful Calvary, in the same style, purchased in the same city.

About a hundred paintings, which he had purchased, had not yet reached Kentucky at the date of writing his letter (end of 1818). Among these were several valuable works of art, two of which he presented to the Cathedral of Bardstown; a Crucifixion, and a scene of St. Bernard's life, a masterpiece which now hangs over the altar of St. Joseph in the Cathedral of Louisville, and which he is said to have purchased from among the wrecks of a church that had recently been sacked by the French. This painting represents St. Bernard, with the Sacred Host in his hand, giving a solemn reproof to William of Aquitaine for his schismatical and licentious conduct. Both these valuable treasures were

removed to Louisville on the transfer of the Episcopal See to that city, in 1814.

More church ornaments and a quantity of books were also on the way; the former were intended for his twelve country missions, which had as yet had but a small share of the bountiful supply which Father Nerinckx had brought with him.

CHAPTER XXII.

1817.

Father Nerinckx in Baltimore.—Mr. and Mrs. Barber.—Father Beschter and the Pennsylvania farmer.—Father Nerinckx' arrival at Loretto.—Father Rosati and the Indians.—A list of the Kentucky clergy in 1817.

Guided by the letter written to his parents in 1818, we will now follow Rev. Father Nerinckx on his way back to his dear Loretto. The narrative may allude to many events more fully set forth in other works, but perhaps add some unknown details; we therefore give it as edited by J. Lesage Ten Broeck:

"During his stay in Baltimore, Rev. Nerinckx was informed of the fact that Mr. Barber, one of the three protestant ministers who had publicly renounced heresy in the presence of Father Fenwick in New York, had left for Rome, where he intended to join the Society of Jesus. His wife, who became a convert at the same time, has, after mutual consent, also embraced the religious state in the Visitation Convent of Georgetown, and their four children are being educated in the academy of the same place. When Luther abandoned the catholic church, he

publicly declared that he could not live without a wife, and he took unto himself a woman consecrated to God. Mr. Barber, abandoning the sect first established by Luther, proves by his conduct that he, lately a preacher of error and bound to a wife, finds grace enough in the catholic religion to abandon every thing to follow Jesus, and to embrace, according to His advice and the example of the Apostles, a state of greater perfection. His wife, on the other hand, shows to the world that a married woman can live without a husband and choose evangelical perfection, and so becomes the honorable counterpart of the carnal Catharine Bora, who broke her vows to become the wife of the fallen Luther!

"Mr. Barber, who enjoyed quite an enviable reputation among protestants, knew but too well their weakness (!) not to be convinced that they would calumniate and slander him in every possible way, unless he guarded himself against their malicious attacks by prudence and circumspection. Before his brother ministers became aware of his intentions, he asked them for a *testimonium*, which he truly said to want for very important reasons. They readily complied with his request, and, owing to his acknowledged talents and good parts, gave him a very honorable and laudatory commendation. As soon as he had the document in his possession, Mr. Barber delayed no longer to declare himself a catholic, and made his public profession of faith, together with two other protestant preachers.

"At the time Father Nerinckx was in Baltimore, the Socinians were building their first meeting-house in the immediate vicinity of the new Freemasons' Lodge. Well-assorted neighbors, indeed! It was also during his sojourn in the city that there fell such a violent and long-continued rain, that, in a few hours, a large portion of the capital of Maryland was under water; many bridges were carried away by the flood, and a number of lives were lost.

"Willingly would the pious Father Nerinckx have visited the Sisters of Charity in Emmettsburg, and the Jesuits of Georgetown, and bid adieu to the young men whom he had so recently sent there; but just as he was getting ready, he received a letter from his Bishop, earnestly entreating him to continue his journey. His spirit of obedience and self-abnegation needed no more to forego that legitimate gratification, and, having bought a horse and saddle for the sum of $140, he immediately set out on his wearisome journey of nearly seven hundred miles.

"In the evening of the same day he reached Frederickstown, where he was received with open arms by the two resident priests—Fathers Mallevé, his old friend, and Beschter,* both Jesuits, in whose pious and entertaining company he spent but a few hours. Father Beschter communicated to him the welcome intelligence that he would soon be enabled to issue a

*Afterward President of Georgetown College.

second tract on the doings of the revolutionary society of Freemasons, one of their principal men having made his profession of faith, and having placed in the hands of said Father many interesting documents which would throw a new light on their secret doings. Among many other interesting anecdotes, Father Beschter related to him the following occurrence, which created at the time considerable merriment in the neighborhood at the expense of the unlucky farmer. Whilst building the beautiful church of Lebanon, Pennsylvania, which, together with the priest's house, cost over $6,000, Father Beschter went around collecting alms of all those who were willing to help along a good work. On his rounds he arrived at the residence of a rich protestant farmer, and asked him for a small donation toward the erection of a church for the poor catholics of the district. The gentleman refused, on the ground that he always paid himself for what he wanted, and never went to others for help. Father Beschter having asked him whether he never stood in need of any body's aid, he gruffly replied that he did not; and upon a second and emphasized inquiry of the priest, an impatient "No, sir! get thee out," was sufficient intimation that he had better leave. "All right!" said the humble disciple of Ignatius, without the least alteration in his manner or voice, and he left the premises. In the course of the day, the farmer strolled to where his men were working in the field, and,

highly elated over his exploit, related to them how he had "fixed that Romish priest." A week later, a heavy freshet, occasioned by sudden rain, completely destroyed his mill and flooded his fields, inflicting incalculable damage on the now crest-fallen bigot, who did not enjoy it half so well when the men recalled to his mind how he *fixed that Romish priest*, and hinted that, forsooth, he might be in need of another man's help sooner than he expected.

"Bidding good-bye to his friends, Father Nerinckx was again in the saddle, and four days' traveling brought him to Pittsburg, where he was obliged to exchange horses, his pony's back being too sore to stand the saddle. Having reached Lewistown, in Kentucky, he again had to trade horses, his being so lame that it could not carry him further. Here he also had the misfortune to fall down a steep flight of stairs. He had put up at a house for the night, and having got up early in the morning, in order to start before daylight, as was his custom, he missed the steps and fell all the way down, with evident danger of his life, escaping, however, with a few severe contusions. Thanking God for his almost miraculous preservation, he continued his journey toward Loretto, where he arrived without further mishap on the 4th of September, 1817, after an absence of two years."

"Our father," writes Sister L——, "arrived at early twilight on Thursday evening. The family being rather on a slight lookout for him,

readily perceived his entrance at the big gate, as it was called. Notice was instantly given from one to another, and presently all were in the yard advancing to meet their worthy, good, and duly cherished father. All were delighted to see him, and he also seemed equally rejoiced to see his devoted children. He had a blessing and a smile for every one, clearly showing his extreme happiness in being once more at his little home, Loretto. He had all to accompany him into the church and to unite with him in a short public prayer of thanks to God for his great success and for his safe return. He then, in a few words, recounted to them his visit to Rome, and to Great Loretto in Italy; also, his visit to Belgium, and the great success with which Divine Providence was pleased to favor him whilst there, and he requested that from that time forward the Family, in all its branch-houses, would ever pray for its generous benefactors of Belgium. He then left the church, and, being yet at the door, was immediately surrounded by all, for the sake of hearing him speak a few words more, aware that they could not accompany him any further. He again talked with them for a while, and then withdrew till Mass next morning. His luggage did not arrive till about three months after."

"On the 8th of September, feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, Father Nerinckx, anxious to pay his respects to Bishop Flaget, visited him at St. Thomas Seminary,

three miles from the episcopal city. Here he met with Very Rev. de Andreis, Vicar-general of Bishop Dubourg and founder of the Congregation of the Mission in America, who, with two other Lazarists, Messrs. Rosati and Acquaroni, was awaiting the arrival of the Bishop. Three Brothers of the Christian Doctrine and four Flemish students were also staying at the Seminary at the time.

"Father Nerinckx next paid a visit to Rev. Badin, with whom he found a young Flemish priest from the environs of Alost, who belonged to the retinue of the Bishop of Louisiana. He had joined Mgr. Dubourg in Ghent, and together with some other young men from Flanders, who designed to help toward the material prosperity of the mission by tilling the ground, had the intention of forming a religious community bound by vows to further the good of religion in Louisiana."

"When I arrived at the Seminary," writes Rev. Nerinckx in 1818, "the three Italian Lazarists were already working on the English speaking mission, and gave proof of great talents. One of them, Father Rosati, who is teaching dogmatic theology, gave a mission in Post Vincennes, and had the happiness of baptizing an Indian chief's son. The young man died shortly after, and the other Indians expressed a great desire of enjoying some day the same blessing. Whilst the Lazarist was still among them, two protestant preachers arrived at the

Indian encampment, bearing to those benighted savages the heavenly tiding embodied in their Bible, and promising them true happiness. The Indians inquired of them whether the masters who had sent them were Blackgowns? Having replied in the negative, the poor fellows were next asked whether they had crucifixes? No, they had not. Had they wives? Yes, they had. 'Ah, well!' remarked the chiefs, 'you are no better than we are, and we do not stand in need of you or yours.' What an important proof of the influence which an unmarried priest, distinguished as such from the generality of people, has over even the uncivilized savages! Post Vincennes has obtained two distinguished young French priests from the Bishop of Louisiana, and so has Detroit.*

"The new diocese in the State of Louisiana† offers the grandest prospects of success for our holy religion, and promises to become soon one of the most interesting missionary fields of christendom. The superior qualifications of Monseigneur Dubourg, the excellency and the number of his co-laborers in that vineyard of our Lord, the vastness of the diocese in which an uncommon and admirable zeal is stirring up alike the Indians and the civilized; every thing seems to promise the realization of these fond hopes. Some little grains of the old seed sown by the

*They were MM. Blanc and Jeanjean, appointed for Vincennes, and MM. Bertrand and Janvier for Detroit.

†St. Louis, in what was then called *Upper Louisiana.*

hand of the ever faithful and never equaled Jesuits have been preserved, and the Netherlanders, so long persecuted for their faith, can not but rejoice and be encouraged at the sight of the miraculous workings of their all-conquering and never conquered faith! I am sure that every year's record will offer material enough to fill a pamphlet with religious news and edifying sketches.

"In Kentucky, the laborers are working zealously enough, but their number is too small to satisfy the demands and the wants of the people, and to gather in the great harvest ready for the reaper. The American youth is yet too little prepared to think of a religious vocation, and the seminary too devoid of means of support to be useful to the desired extent; besides, our catholics are too few in number and too poor to supply the necessary means. This state of affairs, notwithstanding the feeble efforts of a few missionaries supported by the pious generosity of my Belgian countrymen, have already been blessed in a miraculous manner!

"The entire Kentucky clergy consists of the following:

"1. Right Rev. Benedict Joseph Flaget, born in Clermont,* a Sulpitian of Paris; lately profes-

*The Bishop was born in the town of Contournat, commune of St. Julien, not far from Billom, in Auvergne, France. Billom is about ten miles from Clermont Ferrand. See Life of Bishop Flaget, by Bishop Spalding.

sor in the Seminary of Baltimore, and now first Bishop of Bardstown.

"2. Right Rev. J. David, Frenchman and Sulpitian; formerly professor and missionary in Maryland; later, president of St. Thomas Theological Seminary in Kentucky, and now nominated by the Holy See, Coadjutor of the diocese of Bardstown.

"3. Rev. Father Badin, the oldest priest on the mission in these regions.

"4. Rev. Charles Nerinckx, a Belgian, the third one in point of years.

"5. Rev. Father Chabrat, the first priest ordained by the Bishop of Bardstown; a zealous and able Sulpitian.

"6. Rev. Father Olivier, an old and venerable French priest of over seventy years of age, missionary in Kaskaskias, in the Illinois Territory.

"7. Rev. Father De Rigaut, a Frenchman ordained in Kentucky, and devoted to the superintendence of the temporal interests of the diocese.

"8. Rev. Father Mary Joseph, Prior of the Trappists, who thought of settling in Illinois, but who is on his way back with the intention of rejoining his order in France.

"9. Rev. Father Abel, a young American priest, twenty-five years old, and endowed with the most distinguished qualities and superior talents. He is Father Nerinckx' pupil, and his successor in the administration of his distant congregations.

"10. Rev. Charles Cooms, also a young American priest, ordained at the same time with Father Abel.

"The convent of the Dominicans consists of Rev. Father Adam Wilson, an Englishman, and first Provincial of the new mission in America; Rev. Father Edward Fenwick, an American, Prior; Rev. Father Argier, and Rev. Father Tuite. These four are all elderly men, and were formerly in the Bornhem convent, near Antwerp, Belgium. The four others are young priests, viz: Rev. Fathers Willet, Miles, and the two Montgomerys, and complete the list. So that, all told, we have in Kentucky eighteen priests, two of whom are Bishops.

"The Dominicans are also zealously and efficiently at work in Ohio. Rev. Father Fenwick accompanied by his nephew, Rev. N. D. Young, left Kentucky, in 1818, to establish a mission there, and to found an establishment for the education of youth. They have found many German Catholics in these regions, and are desirous of having a few German priests, with good recommendations, to join them in their new field of labor. They write to the Bishop of Bardstown that the Methodists come over in scores, anxious to be received into the catholic church. That extraordinary number of conversions is especially due to the publication of a controversial tract, showing the want of a legitmate mission outside of the true church of Christ; it has had the most happy results, and has made them leave their

unlawful preachers to follow the legitimately appointed pastors of the catholic church.

"Shortly after my arrival in Loretto, the Bishop started on a missionary trip around his diocese, especially among the neighboring scattered Indian tribes of the Northwest. He intends to go as far as Quebec, in Canada, where he is invited to assist at the consecration of the newly appointed Bishop of Havana.

"In a recent letter, the Bishop tells me that he met with a roving tribe of Indians. Desirous to know to what church they belonged, he made the sign of the cross, the want of knowledge of their language preventing any better mode of conversation. They signed themselves immediately in the same manner with boisterous expressions of delight, and some having run to their encampment, soon returned with fragments of old beads which they held up to him with beaming countenances. One of them, somewhat of an interpreter, told the Bishop that some Presbyterian and Calvinistic preachers and Biblemongers had been among them, but that they refused to listen to them or to keep them in their midst. He also managed to make the Bishop understand that, years ago, they had received the first rudiments of the true faith from a Jesuit Father who had been some time with them."

CHAPTER XXIII.

1817–1819.

FATHER NERINCKX RESUMES THE DIRECTION OF HIS SISTERHOOD.—ESTABLISHMENT OF CALVARY, 1816, AND GETHSEMANI, 1818.—ST. AUGUSTINE'S, LEBANON.—FATHER NERINCKX INTRODUCES REV. ABEL TO HIS MORE DISTANT MISSIONS.—HE PURCHASES MOUNT MARY'S FOR A BROTHERHOOD.—ITS SUBSEQUENT HISTORY.

BEFORE leaving on his diocesan visitation, Bishop Flaget wanted to resign into Father Nerinckx' hands the full superiorship of the Sisters of Loretto, the duties of which he had now filled for two years with the most consoling results. But the humble priest, fully convinced of his inability to discharge so important an office, was unwilling to accept the burden. "He alleged his want of piety and prudence, of knowledge and experience, as a sufficient reason to refuse being the Superior of a community of nuns. He insisted upon it, that the Bishop should retain the office of Superior of the new community, and act in all cases as such; as for himself, he would willingly do all he could as well in temporal as in spiritual affairs. He felt all possible interest in the advancement of so useful an institution, and would be happy to de-

vote himself to the welfare of the sisters, who looked upon him as their father and friend, if the Bishop thought proper. His Lordship fully yielded the point. He consented to assume the title of Superior of the community, with the understanding that Father Nerinckx would resume the full management of the affairs of the Society, of which he was in reality the founder; and all things being satisfactorily settled, Bishop Flaget gave us his blessing, bade adieu to all, and returned once more to his cherished little Seminary of St. Thomas."*

When Father Nerinckx left for Europe in 1815, there were fourteen sisters in the community. At successive receptions and professions, ten new members were added to it, and this encouraging increase of the sisterhood induced Bishop Flaget to found, on the 10th of June, 1816, the first branch establishment, at Holy Mary's, under the name of *Calvary*. An effort had been made to form a society of widows, who should live there under a mitigated form of the Loretto rules; an attempt was effectually set on foot, but, owing to the limited number of applicants who felt disposed to leave the world and live a community life, the idea was soon given up, and a colony of sisters sent in their place. Sister *Christina* was the first Superior of Calvary, and she died there. Father Nerinckx gives the following account of her in his notes of 1819: "Sister Christa or Christina died at

* Personal recollections of Sister L——.

Calvary, being Superior or Sister Eldest at the time. Already, before being a nun, she was reputed among all our catholics as the most pious and accomplished young lady then living in the country. . I never saw one more attentive to religious duties than I have known her to be for eleven years in and out of the world. She died as she had lived."

On his return Father Nerinckx first directed his attention to the spiritual wants of his flock, and gave the sisters their first retreat, which ended September 24, 1817, with a solemn reception and profession. He then set to work with more energy than ever to increase the Society's field of usefulness. Mr. and Mrs. James Dent, whose generous offer we already noticed in a former chapter, again offered to Father Nerinckx their house and farm for the establishment of a convent, in the latter part of 1817. This place was well known to many, on account of the piety, christian benevolence, and hospitality of its owners. It was here the missionary would stop to say Mass, administer the sacraments, etc.; and, from a picture of St. Barbara, hung up in the room set apart for divine services, the place was known by the name of *St. Barbara's*. Having no children to provide for, Mr. and Mrs. Dent resolved to devote part of their property to the benefit of the Friends of Mary, and Father Nerinckx thankfully accepted the offer. Mr. Dent, having made suitable preparations, moved to a fine farm ad-

joining the one which he gave to the sisters, and in March, 1818, six sisters, with Sister *Teresa* as superior, took possession of the house, situated on Pottinger's Creek, in Nelson county. Father Nerinckx called it *Gethsemani*, in memory of the agony of our Lord in the garden. He gave the new establishment a handsome share of the goods, which had arrived from Belgium on the previous 27th of December, and soon after built, at his own expense, a grist-mill on the place, for the benefit of the sisters.

The new community did not long enjoy the prudent and wise mother which their director had given them. She died shortly after its foundation, and is referred to in Father Nerinckx' notes in the following terms: "Sister Teresa, of the Grundies, had not a catholic father, and she lost him and her mother in the space of five days. Being left an orphan, she had a great struggle to keep from heresy and corruption among grand and wealthy relations. She chose Loretto for schooling, stood her ground, joined the society, behaved well and was beloved, became the first mother of Gethsemani, and died, as the Right Rev. Bishop observed to me in a letter, a Saint."

The Gethsemani house existed till 1848, when it was sold to the colony of Trappist monks, who came from France on a second attempt to establish their order in Kentucky. This venture was more fortunate than the first; they occupy the convent to this day, and are prospering.

But how did the sisters live? Who supported them? Father Nerinckx answers these questions in a letter to his parents, dated 1818.

"They keep boarders at $50 a year, in order to give an opportunity to all classes of procuring a catholic education for their daughters. The great objection is: How can those different establishments subsist without miracle? How can such an institution go on without incurring the blame of rashness, since the church always requires sufficient means of support before she approves of an institution? I acknowledge my inability of giving you a satisfactory answer; but I know this much: The institute has been commenced under the sanction of a legitimate Bishop; it has grown in the most wonderful manner to its present proportions; it now exists, for the last six years, without incurring a cent of debt; the Sacred Propaganda has taken it under its protection, and enriched it with many spiritual favors; it works wonders of spiritual fruits for our catholic population; the protestants themselves approve of it, and desire to have houses established in their midst. In one word, and here I think is the great secret of success, we here behold feeble women seeking first, and above all, the kingdom of God and its justice, so that we may believe, without presuming too much on the promises of the infallible providence of a God ever true to His word, that every thing else will be added unto them.

We may here add, in answer to these questions, what the humble priest did not say: "Mr. Nerinckx watched over the new institution with the tender solicitude of a parent. He devoted to the spiritual instruction of the sisters and of their scholars all the time he could spare from the heavier duties of his missionary life. He endeavored to infuse into them his own spirit of prayer and mortification. He labored assiduously, both by word and example, to disengage them entirely from the world, and to train them to the practice of a sublime christian perfection. He ardently sought to keep alive in their hearts the true spirit of the religious vocation; to make them despise the world, trample on its vanities, and devote themselves wholly to the service of God and of the neighbor, by a faithful compliance with the duties growing out of the three simple vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience they had taken.

"Especially did he endeavor to impress upon them the obligation of placing implicit reliance on the good providence of God, not only in their spiritual, but also in all their temporal concerns. A favorite maxim, which he had always in his heart and frequently on his lips, was embodied in this golden saying: 'Do not abandon Providence, and he will never abandon you.' How would that good Heavenly Father, who 'clothes the lilies of the field, and feeds the birds of the air,' abandon those who had put all their trust

in Him, and had devoted themselves entirely, both in body and soul, to His service?

"In fact, this unbounded confidence in the providence of God was almost the only legacy he was able to bequeath to the Lorettines. They had, in the commencement of their society, but little of this world's goods to depend upon. It was not difficult for them to practice the poverty which they had vowed: they were already extremely poor and destitute; and, in fulfilling their vow, they had but to love and submit cheerfully to that which was a stern necessity of their condition. Their houses were poor and badly furnished; their clothing was of the plainest kind, and their food was of the coarsest.

"Mr. Nerinckx himself set them the example of the poverty and mortification which their institute required them to love as well as practice. According to the testimony of his Bishop, 'he himself led an extremely austere and mortified life; his dress, his lodging, his food, was poor; and he had filled his monasteries with this holy spirit. Those women sought for poverty in every thing; in their monasteries, in the plain simplicity of their chapels. The neatness, the cleanliness, the simplicity, of their dwellings and of their chapels, excited the wonder of their visitors.'"*

About this time, Father Nerinckx was also

*"Sketches of Kentucky," by Archbishop Spalding; and letter of Bishop Flaget to Bishop England, in U. S. Catholic Miscellany, December 8, 1824.

seriously contemplating the foundation of a house in what is now the State of Missouri. On this subject, he wrote, in 1818: "During my absence, the request which Father Lacroix, a young Flemish priest of Missouri, had made before my departure, of sending a colony of Lorettines to Louisiana, has been reiterated; and I have directed seven of our sisters to hold themselves in readiness to leave, in order to found a new house in Louisiana or Missouri Territory, my intention being to have them consecrate themselves to the welfare and education of the young Indian girls. This new colony will be established under the name of *Olivetines*, near *Bois Brulé*, four hundred miles west of Loretto, at a short distance from the Mississippi and Missouri, where a Seminary is being built."*

Whilst attending to the most urgent needs of the sisterhood, Father Nerinckx was just as solicitous about the wants of his several congregations. He had made arrangements for the building of a brick church, *St. Augustine's*, Lebanon, in 1815, and on his return had set to work with all possible haste in order to make a good start before the Winter of 1817–18. It was the third brick church built by the catholics of Kentucky, St. Patrick's, Danville, being the first, and St. Rose's the second. The fourth one, the cathedral of Bardstown, was, it appears, be-

*At *the Barrens*, where the Lazarists were building. The sisters subsequently went, and of course retained their name of *Lorettines*.

gun early in 1818. The first trustees appointed under the direction of Father Nerinckx for the Lebanon church, were Clement Hamilton, Clement Parsons, and Clement Hill. The church was not completed until 1820, under Father David Deparcq.

Having taken all necessary measures for the continuance of the work, he started from Loretto, loaded with the church articles which he had reserved for his missionary stations, to visit, very likely for the last time,* his distant congregations, the administration of which he intended to leave to his American pupil, Rev. Abel, who accompanied him. They met at Gethsemani, twelve miles from Loretto, the rendezvous previously agreed upon, and started immediately for the new station of *St. Ignatius*, Hardin county, where they remained several days. Whilst here, Rev. Father Abel visited *Elizabethtown*, the county seat of the then Canton (now Hardin) county. Having previously sent word of his arrival, he found a numerous and motley assembly of Anabaptists, Methodists, etc., in attendance at the court-house, a neat and handsome structure for those times. He was listened to with the closest attention, and he explained, to the apparent satisfaction of all parties present, the to them unpalatable truth that out of the catholic church there is no salvation. At the conclusion of his speech, they all crowded around him and invited him to come

* We quote again Father Nerinckx' letter of 1818.

again. One of the leading Baptists of the place was heard to exclaim: "Henceforth, I have done with all other preaching." An elderly lady of the same sect shook hands with the priest, and expressing her gratification at having been present, requested him to visit her family. A prominent merchant of the town, one of the county officers, invited him to dinner, and stated that he would not have missed that sermon for twenty dollars, and promised that, in case the catholics would build a church in Elizabethtown, he would be happy to contribute toward its erection, and would use all his influence to make the undertaking successful.

"The missionaries next bent their steps to the residence of a Methodist, twenty miles further, who had promised them five hundred acres for the erection of a church and convent. They were well received, and, notwithstanding the fact that the man had a brother who was a Methodist preacher, Rev. Abel was invited to address a promiscuous crowd, which had gathered around the house, and did so to the satisfaction of all, only two catholic families being present. They offered great inducements to have a catholic church, and a nunnery for the education of their children, established in their midst, and requested the two priests to call again, and favor them with a sermon.

"*St. Rumoldus* congregation (now Hardinsburg, Breckinridge county), twenty miles distant, was their next stopping place. Father

Nerinckx had built a church here, and now secured some land for the erection of a priest's house and a convent school. Although this was the first missionary trip of the young American priest, Father Nerinckx insisted upon his performing all the pastoral duties, he himself filling the humble position of 'altar-boy,' as he playfully called it.

"On their way to *Morganfield*, a hundred miles from St. Rumoldus, they stopped at *St. Francis Xavier*, a station of little importance, fifty miles distant from either place, and arrived, much fatigued, but ever ready for the arduous missionary work, at the county seat of Union county, a mission consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Father Abel again preached at the court-house, and the attentive gathering only found one fault with the lengthy sermon of the American youth: 'It was too short!' The most bitter animosity and prejudice against the catholic church were rife among protestants in that section of the country. And yet, at the conclusion of the sermon, the head of the Freemasons publicly testified his satisfaction. One of the most prominent townsmen loudly proclaimed that he never heard a better sermon, and that, should he ever join any church, 'he would be a Roman!' For the time being, Father Abel was the hero of the day. 'This is the noblest youth that ever was raised in Kentucky,' was the unanimous verdict of every protestant in Morganfield. As a result of their

labors, one hundred and ten acres of land were donated toward the erection of a catholic school.

"Whilst here, letters were handed to the missionaries, inviting them to push on fifty miles further; but, their time being limited, they had to refuse the pressing invitation with the promise of calling the next time Father Abel would come around.

"Fathers Nerinckx and Abel remained three weeks in Union county, and, in retracing their steps to St. Rumoldus, visited several minor stations on the way. At *St. Teresa's* (Flint Island, Meade county?), where Rev. Abel preached, they were presented with three hundred acres of land for a church, etc. They also accepted the invitation of a protestant, living eight miles away from there, and preached before an exclusively protestant audience, with the same success as heretofore: 'Call again.' A thirty-two mile journey brought them to *St. Anthony's*, Long Lick, Breckinridge county, where a church was being built at the time. In *St. James* mission, Rev. Abel again preached for the protestants in the court-house of Litchfield, Grayson county. Having ascertained that the oldest minister of the place was among his hearers, with the intention, as was whispered around, of indulging in a little bit of controversy, Father Abel invited him up to a seat on the rostrum. The subject was the Sacrament of Penance, and our young orator handled his subject so eloquently that the poor parson did not open his mouth, and mani-

fested ever afterward the most peaceful intentions."

Satisfied that his congregations would only gain by the change, Father Nerinckx intrusted to the energetic Father Abel all his missions situated in the New Tract, and hurried back with a lighter heart to his dear Loretto, where new work awaited him.

"Bishop Flaget," he writes in 1819, "moved by the success of, and the great good brought about by, the institution of the Friends of Mary, desires me to establish a similar society for the young men and boys. The object is to have a religious community of men, whose aim would be the education of the boys, especially those of the middle classes and orphans, whose poverty so often prevents the Church and State from being benefited by their talents." Father Nerinckx went to work without delay; he made an appeal to the catholics of all the surrounding counties, requesting a generous contribution for an establishment which would prove so beneficial to their families; and the sisters, having called at the houses, collected about three thousand dollars. With this money was purchased, from Mr. Joseph Ray, a farm of three hundred and eleven acres, with dwelling-house and some out-houses, which Father Nerinckx christened *Mount Mary's*, as he intended to build on the hill a house dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. The place, as intimated, was intended for the Brotherhood of the

Loretto Society, and, awaiting the happy fulfillment of their founder's cherished plan, the sisters cultivated, for over a year, the newly purchased farm, one hundred acres of which were cleared. "The main building and four of the smaller ones were destroyed by fire, in the beginning of 1819; and, besides that great loss, the almost total destruction of a grist-mill on the place by a violent storm, has injured our prospects considerably." Writes Father Nerinckx in 1819: "Were it not for that last accident, the work would likely be commenced at this very time, for several of our young men desire very earnestly to enter the new institution." *

The blighted prospects of the new enterprise induced Father Nerinckx to consider seriously the possibility of a second trip to Europe, in order to amass funds for the prosecution of his plan. He spoke to Bishop Flaget, who approved of it without hesitation, and the zealous priest at once made preparations for his journey, although not without grave apprehensions about its results. That his apprehensions were well founded, fully appears from a subsequent letter to the Archbishop of Baltimore, written from Belgium, July 17, 1820. He says:

"I meet here with what I told your Grace

* Letter of 1819, to his parents. This place seems to have been haunted by what we commonly call *ill-luck*. The college, built on the same spot by Rev. Wm. Byrne, was again burned in 1822, and a third time some months later. In the light of subsequent facts, it almost looks like a retribution. It was again destroyed by fire in 1860.

and our Right Rev. Bishop I had to expect in the present metamorphosis—a persecution, and a warm one at that! You will no more wonder at it than I do. My projects nearly disappear *in regione principum tenebrarum harum.* I am frequently advised to make good my escape, although I have a sound American passport; and I think I will do so, for my friends and well-wishers suffer more uneasiness about my fate than I do myself. One would say: But what is the matter? I am only a missionary; I beg for the good of religion in a foreign country! . . . But less than this is enough to kindle a whole army of liberals with wrath. You need not wonder should I, if health permits, have the honor to see your Lordship before Winter. Mr. Chabrat can not come yet. . . . I think you will get an altar-piece of real worth for your Metropolitan church. . . . I hope I will be able to procure a picture for the altar at Mr. Thompson's, in the Alleghany Mountains. . . ."

But before accompanying Father Nerinckx on his second journey, we must give a short account of Mount Mary's subsequent history. During his absence, Bishop Flaget took upon himself to attend to the spiritual wants of the sisters of Loretto, and of some of his congregations. Having ordained Father Deparcq, a countryman of Father Nerinckx', Christmas, 1820, he shortly after appointed him to attend to the sisters of Calvary, and to take charge of St. Augustine's church, Lebanon, the construc-

tion of which that reverend gentleman completed in 1821. The Bishop further relieved himself of the too onerous missionary duties, which interfered very much with his episcopal occupations, by appointing the Rev. Wm. Byrne to attend to St. Charles' and Holy Mary's congregations.

The latter young clergyman had passed his life in collegiate employment, and the necessity of doing something for the instruction of the male youth so forcibly appealed to his energetic sympathies, that he resolved to begin a college immediately. Unwilling to await the return of its owner, he took possession of Mount Mary's farm, and with the consent of the Bishop of Bardstown, made all the necessary arrangements, so that, by the time that Father Nerinckx returned from Europe in 1821, the school was in a flourishing condition, and its president unwilling to give up to the missionary the farm which he had bought for the foundation of his new brotherhood.* Father Nerinckx was accompanied by three Flemish youths, with whom he had designed to begin the new institution. Several young Kentuckians also applied to him for admission into the society, and the self-sacrificing priest did all in his power to recover Mount Mary's and establish his brotherhood. But he met with no encouragement, and a great

*The facts as here related, although differing from the version given in the "Sketches of Kentucky," rest on most reliable documents.

deal of opposition, so that the original project was never carried into effect.

One of the Belgian youths died of dropsy at Calvary convent, shortly after his arrival. The two others, MM. Van Ryssclberghe and Gilbert, remained at Loretto until 1824, when the former accompanied Father Nerinckx to Missouri; after the missionary's death, Mr. Van Ryssel-berghe returned to Kentucky, and having married, settled in the environs of Bardstown. Mr. Gilbert, or *Brother Gilbert*, as he was more commonly called, remained until his death at the different establishments of the Loretto Society, attending to the farm work. He died at Cedar Grove, Mt. St. Benedict Academy, Louisville, Ky., in 1867.

After the death of Father Nerinckx, Bishop Flaget, at the instance of Father Chabrat, moved the Loretto convent to St. Stephen's, the farm lately held by Rev. Badin, which he gave to the sisters in exchange for Mount Mary's. From that time forward, St. Mary's Seminary, as it was now called, had a smooth course of uninterrupted prosperity.

Rev. Wm. Byrne conducted the college with much success till 1832, when, desiring to elevate the standard of studies, he proposed to Bishop Flaget to invite the Jesuit Fathers to take St. Mary's College, instead of St. Joseph's College, Bardstown, which had been offered to them as early as 1829. This suggestion met with the approval of all parties, and the college was

transferred to Rev. Peter Chazelle, S. J., and companions in 1832, though Father Byrne, by request, continued to fill the office of president till his death, by cholera, on June 5, 1833. Father Chazelle succeeded him as president. He and his brother Jesuits that were with him, having but a limited knowledge of the English language, he applied to his Provincial in France for suitable professors in English literature. Father William Murphy and others of the Lyons province were selected, and arrived in Kentucky about the beginning of February, 1836.

Father Chazelle resigned the presidency of St. Mary's in 1839, and Father Murphy, who, assisted by Rev. Robert Abel, had, in 1837, obtained a charter for the college, was appointed his successor. He remained president till the Summer of 1846, when the Jesuits abandoned Kentucky, and accepted from Bishop Hughes, St. John's College, Fordham, New York, in August of the same year.

In 1847, St. Mary's College was again intrusted to the secular clergy. The following were its successive presidents:

1848. Rev. Julian Delanne, President.
1849. Rev. John McGuire, President.
Rev. Francis Lawler, Vice-President.
1851. Rev. John B. Hutchins, President.
Rev. Francis Lawler, Vice-President.
1853. Rev. Francis Lawler, President.
Rev. Michael Coghlan, Vice-President.

In 1856, Rev. Francis Lawler was President, and Rev. Edmund Driscoll, Vice-President, till spring, when Rev. John B. Hutchins became President for the remainder of the scholastic year, and again put the college on a sound financial footing.

In September, 1856, Rev. P. J. Lavialle, afterward Bishop of Louisville, was appointed President of St. Mary's College, with Rev. Jos. H. Elder as Vice-President. The latter remained only a few months, and was succeeded in the Vice-Presidency by Rev. A. Viala.

1865. Rev. A. Viala, President.
Rev. T. J. Disney, Vice-President.

Closed in 1869. The college entered upon a new era of usefulness, when the Resurrectionist Fathers assumed its control, in September, 1871, with Rev. L. Elena, C. R., President, and Rev. D. Fennessy, C. R., Vice-President.

1873. Rev. D. Fennessy, C. R., President.
Rev. R. De Carolis, C. R., Vice-President.

1879. Rev. D. Fennessy, C. R., President.
Rev. A. Vaghi, C. R., Vice-President.

CHAPTER XXIV.

1819–1820.

Consecration of the Cathedral of Bardstown.—The Theological Seminary.—Consecration of Bishop David.—New Dioceses.—Catholic statistics of the United States and Kentucky.—Statistics of the Loretto society.—Father Nerinckx' last will.

A Flemish journal of his last trip to Europe, in which he also noted the events that happened before and during his journey, was written by Father Nerinckx in London, and presented to his tried and good friend, J. G. Lesage Ten Broeck, of Loosduinen, the very day of his departure for America. That gentleman published the manuscript in Flanders for the benefit of the American missions, July 14, 1825, most likely at the request of Rev. John Nerinckx, of London, to whom Bishop Flaget wrote a few weeks after his brother's death: "For God's sake spur on the friends of your reverend brother, not to forget his excellent foundations, and the poor Bishop of Kentucky." From that journal, we gather into the present chapter the events relating to the years 1819 and 1820, thus remaining faithful to the chronological order.

"The second Sunday of August, 1819, St. Joseph's cathedral church of Bardstown was consecrated with great pomp and edification by Right Rev. Benedict Joseph Flaget, the first Bishop of this diocese, assisted by his clergy and seminarians, in the presence of perhaps four thousand people of all classes, professions, and beliefs.* This church, planned in 1817, is far from finished, although services are performed in it. Altars, confessionals, organ, bells, etc., are yet wanting. It has cost, so far, about $20,000, is well built, and large enough to accommodate about four thousand people. I sent you the plan of it, together with a view of the Seminary, where there are at present sixteen theologians. It is here that the priests of Bardstown live in community with the Bishop, whose apartments consist of a single room, with a bed in an alcove. Bishop David, the Coadjutor, is similarly lodged.

"The Seminary was built under the following circumstances: A Trappist lay-brother, a clockmaker by trade, who had remained in America

*This was a great event for the Bishop and clergy of Kentucky, especially so for the two old pioneers, Fathers Badin and Nerinckx, who had seen—aye, cradled—the infant catholic church in Kentucky. It was on this occasion that Father Nerinckx offered to the happy Bishop Flaget a poetic tribute, which speaks more for his knowledge of English than his own modest opinion of his "barbaric way of writing and speaking it," would make us suppose. The original of these lines is in Father Nerinckx' own handwriting, and now in the possession of the Superior of Mount Benedict, Cedar Grove, Louisville, Kentucky. We print it in the appendix.

after the Trappist Fathers left for Europe, settled in Bardstown, where he followed his trade to the satisfaction of all the citizens, who respected him much for his honest, straightforward piety and his great skill as a mechanic. He had expressed his wish, but by word of mouth only, that in case of his death, his property and other worldly possessions should go to the Bishop. Returning, one holiday, from church through a heavy rain storm, he had to wade through a river about a mile from Bardstown, and, although the water was very high and the current violent, he, and one of his workboys mounted on the same horse behind him, imprudently resolved to cross. They had scarcely gone a few rods, when the horse was swept from under them, and both riders disappeared beneath the seething waters. Few persons were within hailing distance, nor was there, to the great and sincere sorrow of all who knew him, the slightest chance to save them. His will by word of mouth was sworn to before the civil authorities, and the Bishop having represented that he intended to use the estate for the building of a Seminary, the court declared the bequest lawful and allowed the Bishop to enter into the possession of the $2,200 left him. Monseigneur Flaget immediately bought five acres of ground next to the cathedral, for $800, put up a building of two stories and basement, and they are now laying out the grounds, gardens, etc., most of this work being done by the theologians.

About the time we were leaving (1820), he was making arrangements for an academic school in the same building, which is to remain there until he can dispose of sufficient means to construct a special building for that purpose. The most influential protestants of the town send their children to it, although they have a public school under the supervision of their own co-religionists; they allege that they prefer to intrust their children to the care of two catholic Bishops.

"The *petit Seminaire* of St. Thomas, with a similar school attached to it, is prospering finely on the farm situated about three miles from Bardstown. They have now nineteen students who prepare themselves for the ecclesiastical state."

A further handsome donation was made to Bishop Flaget by an English lady, as appears from the following extract of the *Catholic Miscellany* of January 12, 1824: "We notice with considerable satisfaction a charitable and religious bequest of a handsome amount made to the venerable Bishop of Bardstown for the use of his diocese, by the late Mrs. Mary Mercer, of Bakerville, Derbyshire, England. This pious lady embraced the catholic religion at the age of sixteen; each succeeding year evinced the sincerity of her belief and manifested the extent of her charity. She has left considerable donations to several catholic institutions."

"The *Sisters of Charity*, founded by Rev. J.

David, in Nazareth, have bought a piece of land in Bardstown, and established a school there which prospers. They also sent a colony to Breckinridge, seventy miles from Bardstown, one of my old missions attended to at present by Rev. Father Abel. Their founder, at that time president and professor of St. Thomas' Seminary, was consecrated Bishop Coadjutor of Bardstown, on August 19, 1819. I assisted at that imposing ceremony as the oldest priest of the diocese, Rev. Badin, who is the oldest resident priest, although younger in years, being in Europe, where he will perhaps spend the rest of his life.

"I might also have told you how they managed to build the steeple of the Bardstown Cathedral. The funds were exhausted, but the architect, who gave proof of the most ardent zeal for the completion of his work, bethought himself of a new plan to raise the necessary funds. The clock which I brought from Ninove, in Flanders, and which is a truly wonderful timepiece, suggested to him the means of exciting the people to renewed exertions. He placed it in the front wall of the church, the two little silver-toned bells striking the hours. The people acknowledged that so beautiful a clock should adorn a steeple, and they consented to a subscription, which realized enough to complete the work.

"Bardstown used to be the pleasure garden of Presbyterians and Anabaptists; hence it is a

great mortification for these sects to see that Old Church which they so cordially hated and persecuted for the last three hundred years, looming up triumphantly in their midst. Animated by an unlooked-for zeal or spite, they made an attempt to build a meeting-house which would far surpass the catholic cathedral. Although headed and advocated by one of the most influential lawyers and best orators of the city—an ex-congressman of no small ability—their subscription reached only $3,000. The gentleman referred to laid the matter before the architect who had built the cathedral, but he peremptorily refused to have any thing to do with the church.

"The Bishop of Bardstown intends to undertake another journey to Post Vincennes; his main object is to examine the country, preparatory to the establishment of several new dioceses which are going to be erected in the West. They name Vincennes, Cincinnati, and Detroit; also, Natchez in the South and Charleston in the East; St. Louis will be raised to the dignity of an archbishopric, and New Orleans obtain a coadjutor. Three or four new dioceses will be formed out of the present diocese of Bardstown, and there will be ground enough left for three additional ones before another twenty years. The bearer of this new circumscription of dioceses will be an Italian of high birth and extensive domains, who, having become disgusted with the world, has sacrificed all earthly prospects to embrace the ecclesiastical state and de-

vote himself entirely to the missions. He is already ordained, and will soon leave for Rome, in order to dispose of his worldly goods, where he will, at the same time, attend to the important affairs of the American Bishops.

"The future diocese of Cincinnati has at present only two priests, Dominican Fathers of the Bornhem house, near Antwerp. The diocese of Vincennes will also have two, and the diocese of Detroit only one, if I except a Trappist who is likely already gone; Natchez has two priests; so that the new Bishops will have plenty of work and difficulties when they arrive. There will then be eleven dioceses in the United States of North America, all, except Baltimore, erected by Pius VII. The other dioceses are, perhaps, as much in need of a division as Bardstown, for our holy faith is not at a standstill in America, as some pretend to make you believe.

"Right here, I may just as well give you a short and concise history of the present state of the church.

"When I arrived in America, in 1804, there were only two dioceses—Baltimore and New Orleans. Baltimore had, at that time, its first Bishop—the American John Carroll, of the Order of Jesuits, who, respected by all, closed his earthly career, full of merits and worth, as first Archbishop of the United States, at the age of eighty-two. His death occasioned universal and unfeigned regret; all the newspapers ap-

peared in mourning, an honor which had been paid only to the great Washington, and his burial did not cede in grandeur to that of the hero who had effected America's independence. The See of New Orleans was vacant and administered by a Vicar Apostolic. The present head of the church, Pius VII., aware of the state of the church in these regions, and seeing persecution, much in vogue before the Revolutionary War, subside, erected, in 1810, the new dioceses of Philadelphia, Boston, New York, and Bardstown, Kentucky. His Lordship, Monseigneur Cheverus, a Frenchman and one of the nominated prelates, making a public allocution on the occasion of this consecration, spoke with such unction and touching grace in his broken English, that the Archbishop himself, moved to tears, exclaimed: 'How is this? This good Frenchman, whom we scarcely understand, makes every one of us weep!'

"We have now in the United States seven DIOCESES: 1. New Orleans, the oldest of all; 2. Baltimore, Archdiocese; 3. New York; 4. Philadelphia; 5. Boston; 6. Bardstown; 7. St. Louis; and the following cathedral churches: Baltimore, New Orleans, New York, Bardstown, St. Louis. The Cathedral church of Detroit is being built.* The other Bishops use the old churches.

"THEOLOGICAL SEMINARIES.—Baltimore and

* Father G. Richard began the erection of St. Ann's church in 1816.

Bardstown under the direction of the Sulpitians; and St. Louis directed by the Lazarists.

"SCHOOLS FOR BOYS AND YOUNG MEN.—1. The Jesuits are at Georgetown College; it has been erected into a university.

"2. The Sulpitians: In Baltimore and Emmettsburg, Maryland; and Bardstown, Kentucky.

"3. The Lazarists in St. Louis.

"4. The Dominicans in Kentucky.

"5. The Brothers of the Christian Doctrine, at Ste. Genevieve, Illinois.

"ACADEMIES FOR GIRLS.—1. The Ladies of the Sacred Heart, St. Ferdinand, Illinois.*

"2. The Ursulines at New Orleans.

"3. The Sisters of the Visitation, Georgetown, Md.

"4. The Sisters of Charity, in Emmettsburg, New York, Philadelphia, Conewago, Bardstown, Nazareth, and Rough Creek, Breckinridge county, Ky.†

"5. The Friends of Mary, in Loretto, Calvary, and Gethsemani, Ky.

"The number of catholics in the States can only be guessed at, but I think I am not much out of the way, in setting it down as three hundred thousand.

"As already said, Bardstown will be divided

*Now Missouri. This village, now called *Florissant*, is in St. Louis county, Mo.

†The four first-named academies belonged to Mother Seton's foundation; the three latter to Bishop David's.

into three or four new dioceses: Detroit, in Michigan Territory, near Lake Erie; Vincennes, in the State of Indiana; and Cincinnati, in Ohio. The diocese of Bardstown, now ten years old, has twenty-seven or more churches in which services are held, not counting the church of St. Hubert, which will, however, soon be finished. This *St. Hubert's** church is being built in an incipient town called Lebanon, about six miles from Loretto. The Presbyterians were the only denomination in the place, and they undertook to build a large church when the catholics began theirs; but, meeting with little or no encouragement, they had to abandon the undertaking, whilst the catholics went ahead, the protestants contributing more than a third of the sum needed. To those who found fault with their generosity toward the *Papists*, they answered that they knew beforehand that the Presbyterians could not succeed, whilst the *Romans* succeed in all their undertakings: "they do not make much noise,' they said, 'but they do business bravely indeed!' To this church I gave ornaments, a chalice, a clock for the steeple, and a painting and relics of St. Hubert.

"The following churches in Kentucky are built of brick: The cathedral of Bardstown; the

*The same finished, by Rev. Deparcq, under the name of *St. Augustine*. It is to be regretted that the original name given it by its founder was not retained, especially so because he left it relics of its should-be patron Saint.

church of the petit Seminary of St. Thomas; St. Peter's, Lexington, a city of eight thousand inhabitants; St. Louis', Louisville, which will become one of the largest cities of the Union, owing to its situation on the beautiful Ohio river; St. Patrick's, Danville; St. Rose's, the church of the Dominicans; and St. Hubert's, Lebanon. This last one is the only brick church in my missions; the others are all frame buildings. Some of my congregations had already determined to build new brick churches, and would have succeeded, were it not that they were in too great a hurry to get rich, and entered into a poor speculation. Covetousness and wisdom seldom follow the same advice. They took upon themselves to start several public independent banks; the government acquiesced, and almost every little settlement had a similar bank. But they most all went beyond the limitations of their charter, were unable to meet the demand for money and to redeem their circulating paper in coin, and were forced in consequence to enter into bankruptcy. This speculation began three years ago (1817), augmented the price of goods twenty per cent., ruined most of the common people, and, of course, knocked many another undertaking into the head. We now suffer the consequences of their folly.

"The clergy of the diocese of Bardstown is composed of the following gentlemen:

"1. Right Rev. Benedict Joseph Flaget.

"2. Right Rev. John David, Bishop of Mauri-Castrensis, Coadjutor of Bardstown.

"3. Rev. Olivier, a venerable old man of about eighty years; still zealously at work at Kaskaskias, in the Illinois Territory.

"4. Rev. Gabriel Richard, a Sulpitian missionary; stationed in Detroit.

"5. Rev. Stephen Theodore Badin, the only priest whom I found in Kentucky; stationed at St. Stephen. He had no neighboring priest within four hundred miles of him—a fact which moved me to join him.

"6. Rev. Charles Nerinckx, at Loretto, eighteen miles from Bardstown.

"7. Rev. Guy Chabrat,* the first priest ordained by our Bishop; stationed at St. Michael's Mission, Nelson county.

"8. Rev. Derigault, Director of the little Seminary of St. Thomas.

"9. Rev. Ganiltz,† residing at St. Stephen's.

"All these, except myself, are Frenchmen.

"10. Rev. R. Abel, an American; missionary priest at St. Rumoldus,‡ Hardinsburg.

"11. Rev. C. Cooms, an American; Treasurer of the St. Thomas little Seminary.

* Afterward Coadjutor Bishop of Bardstown.

† He afterward went to Michigan.

‡ The name is now given as *St. Romuald.* Father Nerinckx had put that church under the protection of the Belgian patron Saint of the Metropolitan church of Mechlin, *St. Rumoldus* (French: Rombaut); likely because he had been vicar of that church. The similarity of names probably occasioned the change by a mistake.

"12. Rev. M. G. Elder, an American; President of the Collegiate department at the great Seminary of St. Joseph.

"13. Rev. Wm. Byrne, an Irishman; at Holy Mary's, Washington county.

"14. Rev. Blanc,* a French secular missionary priest; stationed at Vincennes, with

"15. Rev. Ferraris, an Italian Lazarist.

"To the Dominican Convent of St. Rose, fifteen miles from Bardstown, belong:

"1. Rev. Wilson, Provincial of the new province.

"2. Rev. Angier, at present on the mission in Maryland.

"3. Rev. Tuite, at St. Rose's.

"All Englishmen.

"The others are all Americans, viz:

"4 and 5. The two Fathers Montgomery.

"6. Rev. Willett.

"7. Rev. Miles.†

"The two following:

"8. Rev. Edward Fenwick,‡ and

"9. Rev. Young started a new mission in the State of Ohio, which will flourish and grow rapidly as soon as a Bishop is appointed for it. Many Methodists become converts there.

"I do not mention the students who are not yet ordained priests, nor the priests belonging to the diocese of St. Louis, lately established.

* Afterward Archbishop of New Orleans.

† Afterward first Bishop of Nashville.

‡ Later first Bishop of Cincinnati.

"The area and extent of the present diocese of Bardstown is as follows:

"Kentucky, from east to west, three hundred and twenty-eight miles; from north to south, one hundred and eighty-three miles. Ohio, from east to west, two hundred and twenty-eight miles; from north to south, two hundred and twenty-seven miles. Tennessee, from east to west, four hundred and twenty miles; from north to south, one hundred and four miles. Michigan, from east to west, two hundred and fifty-six miles; from north to south, one hundred and fifty-four miles.*

"Exclusively of Indiana and part of Illinois, an area of one thousand nine hundred miles, is to be crossed in all directions by the Bishop and his twenty-one priests just named.

"When I came to Kentucky, the population was estimated at two hundred thousand inhabitants; it is said to be half a million to-day. The other States are growing in the same proportion; hence you can imagine the amount of work which awaits the zealous missionary. It would be beyond the bounds of a letter to make further remarks. We may, however, imagine how many souls must be lost by sheer want of priests, and how happy are those who do not suffer such a want.

"The diocese of Bardstown has already two Seminaries and three public schools taught by

* He evidently speaks only of the portions then known or included within Territorial limits.

seminarians; a convent of the Dominican Order and school, and another commencing in Ohio; the congregation of the Sisters of Charity, situated at Nazareth, near St. Thomas, out of which, as already noted, sprung two other establishments; and the Loretto Society, which now contains eighty members, forty-one of whom, whose names here follow, made their vows for life on the 20th day of December, 1819.

PLACE.	CONVENT NAME.	FAMILY NAME.	BIRTHPLACE.	OFFICE, ETC.
Loretto.	Dear Mother Mary.	Mary Rhodes.	Washington, Md.	Generalissima.
Loretto.	Mother Ann.	Anna Ilevern.	Madison County, Ky.	Superior. Her mother is a convert.
Calvary.	Mother Juliana.	Anna Wathen.	Washington County, Ky.	Superior.
Gethsemani.	Mother Helena.	Elizabeth Miles.	Casey County, Ky.	Superior.
Loretto.	Sister Eldest Barbara.	Henrietta Clements.	Union County, Ky	Assistant Superior.
Calvary.	Sister Eldest Bibiana.	Lee a Elder.	Nelson County, Ky.	Assistant Superior.
Gethsemani.	Sister Eldest Rosalia.	Catharine Clarke.	Nelson County, Ky.	Assistant Superior.
Gethsemani.	Sister Guardian Clara.	Eleonora Morgan.	Nelson County, Ky.	Head Teacher.
Loretto.	Sister Guardian Isabella.	Ann Clarke.	Nelson County, Ky.	Head Teacher.
Calvary.	Sister Guardian Agnes.	Anna Hart.	Breckinridge County, Ky.	
Loretto.	Sister Sarah.	Sarah Ilevern.	Madison County, Ky.	
Loretto.	Sister Monica.	Monica Spalding.	Washington County, Ky.	
Calvary.	Sister Mechtildis.	Susan Hayden.	Illinois, Louisiana.*	
Calvary.	Sister Catharine.	Mary Drury.	Nelson County, Ky.	
Gethsemani.	Sister Louisa.	Mary Phillips.	Scott County, Ky.	
Loretto.	Sister Joanna.	Cœcilia Mills.	Illinois, Louisiana.*	
Calvary.	Sister Angelica.	Christina Clements.	Union County, Ky.	
Gethsemani.	Sister Scholastica.	Margaret Thompson.	Nelson County, Ky.	
Loretto.	Sister Rose.	Elizabeth Elder.	Nelson County, Ky.	
Loretto.	Sister Elizabeth.	Margaret Mattingly.	Washington County, Ky.	
Loretto.	Sister Aloysia.	Elizabeth McAtee.	Nelson County, Ky.	
Loretto.	Sister Constantia.	Anastasia Spalding.	Washington County, Ky.	
Calvary.	Sister Eleonora.	Helena Clarke.	Nelson County, Ky.	
Loretto.	Sister Felicitas.	Barbara Dieffendall.	Nelson County, Ky.	
Gethsemani.	Sister Anastasia.	Bridget Morgan.	Bullitt County, Ky.	
Gethsemani.	Sister Apollonia.	Ann McBride.	Bullitt County, Ky.	
Calvary.	Sister Martha.	Elizabeth Buckman.	Union County, Ky.	
Calvary.	Sister Justina.	Mary Cook.	Nelson County, Ky.	
Gethsemani.	Sister Cœcilia.	Susan Cecil.	Nelson County, Ky.	
Gethsemani.	Sister Agatha.	Julia Flaherty.	Bullitt County, Ky.	
Loretto.	Sister Martina.	Margaret Drury.	Bullitt County, Ky.	
Loretto.	Sister Ursula.	Mathilda Coomes.	Bullitt County, Ky.	
Calvary.	Sister Victoria.	Susan Coomes.	Bullitt County, Ky.	
Loretto.	Sister Lucia.	Hetty Calhoun.	Washington County, Ky.	Her father was a Protestant.
Gethsemani.	Sister Gertrudis.	Catharine Bowles.	Nelson County, Ky.	
Calvary.	Sister Susan.	Sarah Drury.	Nelson County, Ky.	
Gethsemani.	Sister Melania.	Bridget King.	Nelson County, Ky.	
Loretto.	Sister Paulina.	Margaret Whelan.	Nelson County, Ky.	
Calvary.	Sister Gudula.	Elizabeth Jarboe.	Breckinridge County, Ky.	
Calvary.	Sister Reineldis.	Elizabeth Hayden.	Washington County, Ky.	
Loretto.	Sister Frances	Maria Drury.	Washington County, Ky.	

* The Illinois Territory, lately formed, was considered part of Louisiana of that day, as it had belonged to France.

"In the eight years of its existence, we have to chronicle the death of only three of its members, one in each of the three houses, and in each case the Superior, as if the head had to be the foundation stone of each establishment. Their death, like their life, had all the signs of predestination."

Father Nerinckx being afraid that he might be unable to come back to Kentucky, through the interference of the Dutch government, of the inimicable feelings of which he was, as we have seen, perfectly well aware, wrote, before his departure for Europe, the following:

"OPEN WILL AND WISH OF THE WRITER.

(†)

"1820, 5th of February, and fifty-ninth year of his age.

"The writer of this, at the eve of leaving this country, declares that he has no temporal possessions or property to dispose of; what was under his name since he came to America he never pretended to be the owner of. God, God's Mother, God's Church, have bestowed these gifts upon him, and he hopes he has directed them well and returned them to the same proprietors. For the waste and ill employment or wrong applications, he begs pardon of God and men.

"When he will be back in Europe, he will, at this journey's end, be poorer than he was in 1804, when he started from thence for America. He thanks God for not having given him the

means of heaping up riches, and for the health of body which he has enjoyed during the whole time of his residence in this new part of the world, the citizens and inhabitants whereof he knows not that he has done any material injury, so as to be under obligation of restoring any thing ill-gotten.

"As for his employment and call in the holy ministry, its duties and performances, he can but blush, grieve, and dread. He hopes that able hands, holy zeal, and fervor will repair losses and damages caused or not prevented by him, and himself find room and time to meet his God at a merciful hour. Amen.

"The property of land and negroes, etc., in the deeds of which his name was mentioned, is, by way of will, disposed of in another writing. What is yet to be disposed of are the following articles:

"1. The utensils at the new place (which I would call Mount Mary, as I wish a building in honor of Mary on the hill of it), he paid two hundred dollars for, a sum they may be worth now. It is his desire that this money should go toward paying the expenses of a clergyman from over the sea for Kentucky. He received also five hundred guilders, say $180, for that purpose, which was not complied with, there being no suitable gentleman who offered himself.

"2. Seven hundred guilders more were given by Miss Du Moulin, of Mons, in Flanders, for

an anniversary in the Loretto chapel, or for some Masses, founded at her intention. But he thinks her intention more in particular was to assist religion in America. This foundation is not made; but he said some Masses, and some solemn ones have been celebrated. Both these matters are left to stand as they are: it belongs to the Bishop to fix them.*

"The House of Loretto is bound to pray for these as for the other benefactors.

"3. The congregations now in Rev. Mr. Abel's care owe him $25.75 for loaned money when Hardinsburg land was bought. If there be any sisters sent to Union county, as the Bishop said, they may have this money. Charles Vessel's ten dollars and George Thompson's debts are for Loretto. Thomas Cecil's forty dollars will give twenty dollars to Loretto, ten for Gethsemani, and ten for Calvary.

"The mortuary house of Leon. Hamilton owes him for Masses and salaries, I think, at least twenty dollars; these he gives to Calvary. . . .

"4. Should the congregations once under his care ever be moved to pay him salaries, they may be divided among the nunneries for the benefit of the orphans.

"5. If tidings arrive that he is dead, or does not return, his clothes, linen, pictures, and English books, as far as useful, are for the orphans of the schools, savingly and sparingly to be

*The reader will recollect that these moneys were used for Loretto's benefit.

made use of. Loretto having to take care of the greatest number, must have the greatest share.

"6. The church apparatus, viz., chalices, vestments, etc., he desires to remain as they are and where they are at present. The bells of Loretto never to be removed, nor the pictures. The little chalice his brother of London gave him, and now at Mr. James Dent's, is only lent to him; it may remain there his lifetime, if no more urgent call comes.

"7. The books at Loretto ought to be kept unmolested, and the little library may be at the service of the reverend gentleman who has the care of Loretto, only; best care to be taken of them, but never to become his property, not even to change them for others.

"The whole recommended to the care of the Right Rev. Bishop Flaget, or his successor in the See of Bardstown.

"P. S. If Vincent Gates and Polly Brewer live, they may have a share in the clothes.

"The writer's WISH, as an addition to his WILL, is: A great desire and prayer that the extensive tracts of America he has walked over, and those many places in Europe he has passed by, may not call for vengeance upon him, for spilling in so many places the most holy and precious Blood of the true Son of God, and true Son of the most Blessed Mary his Mother, out of whom he was willing to take his human nature for our sake. How many Sacraments here received,

how many Sacraments here given! How many worthily, how many unworthily! How many blunders, how many defects, how many ignorances! How many souls to answer for!

"2. He wishes that all the congregations wherever he was, be forever recommended to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, in which unbounded seas of love and mercy he desires his own numberless failings to be drowned, and out of which he begs that streams of graces may flow over these different flocks he has been so long tedious and unprofitable to.

"3. He began at the buildings of the church of Holy Mary's, and he finishes at the House of the Virgin Mary, Loretto. May he die under the protection of his Mother of Mercy!

"4. He wishes the Friends of Mary the best success in holiness and all holy happiness, that the Suffering Jesus and the Sorrowful Mary may have armies of consoling Friends, faithful on Calvary and glorious in the Heavenly Sion.

"In order to this, he begs by all the drops of blood and by all the sweat and tears of the Loving Jesus, and through the sweetness of Mary, that the members of the Loretto Society and particularly of the House of Loretto, should ever study their rules—never make any the least infraction in them. Poverty and humility of Jesus and Mary; obedience and chastity of Jesus and Mary; union, peace, and concord of Jesus and Mary; zeal for souls—your own and that of so many desolate orphans and scholars

—burning zeal of Jesus and Mary! Gain souls, hunt souls, catch souls, court souls, draw souls, pull souls, carry souls, deliver souls, shelter souls, buy souls! . . . Souls! souls! and nothing but souls, for the love of Jesus, the owner of all souls!

"O Loretto Sisters! let Loretto be Loretto forever!—Loretto houses, Loretto dresses, Loretto labors, Loretto hardships, Loretto food, Loretto furniture, Loretto sisters, Loretto scholars! Every house on the place Loretto house! Stick to the tree that Mary planted there! Stick to the cross that Mary raised there! Stick to the walls that Mary built there! Stick to the dress that Mary gave there! Make use of the graces that Mary obtained there! Love what she said! Like what she fixed! Do what she loved! O Friends of Mary! O sweet, O glorious title! Be not unworthy of it! Do not degenerate from it!

"The writer's wish is here set down on paper; may he hear it accomplished on earth, and may he see it rewarded in the company of the Friends of Mary in heaven! Amen! Amen!!"

Address:

"To the Friends of Mary."

CHAPTER XXV.

1820.

FATHER NERINCKX' SECOND JOURNEY TO EUROPE.—*Mustela putorius* OR *Mephitis americana?*—MAJOR NOBLE, OF VIRGINIA.—REMINISCENCES BY THE WAYSIDE: THE INDIAN CHIEF OF VINCENNES.—MR. THOMPSON, OF THE ALLEGHANIES.—BALTIMORE AND ITS ENVIRONS.—LONDON.—LETTERS OF BISHOP FLAGET, THE SISTERS OF LORETTO AND FATHER NERINCKX.

FATHER NERINCKX, accompanied by Rev. Mr. Chabrat, who was going on a visit to his native France, started on his second journey to Europe in the Spring of 1820. The following interesting account of their journey on horseback to Baltimore, written at his brother's house in Somerstown, London, in dated:

"O. L. ASCENSION DAY, 1820.

"Two months and four days from Loretto to London.

"We left the Seminary of Bardstown the 9th day of March, 1820; a violent wind, a frost which lasted about four weeks, and six inches of snow on the ground, rendering our journey very painful and dangerous. My companion, who is blessed with the gift of tongue, preached at sev-

eral towns, in the court-houses (there being no churches), along the way, to the great satisfaction of all, but especially of those to whom the tenets of our Holy Catholic Faith were yet new. After about a week's travel, we met with a little accident which may excite your curiosity. Right before us on the road was a little animal about the size of a small dog, entirely unknown to us, but beautiful to look at, with its striped fur and handsome tail. We hastened to surprise it, and make it come to a standstill; but the thing seemed in no hurry, and just as we tried to bring it within reach by a light stroke of the whip, it settled quietly down, and wagging its beautiful tail, made a well directed sweep at us with a certain liquid substance which emitted the most abominable of odors. This most unbearable of smells communicated itself to our clothes, and saturated them so that it annoyed us for two months. Some say that the stench never leaves them, and the dogs who hunt that animal are sick for many days after, infecting their master's house and even the grain in the barn. That interesting animal is called a *polecat;* we had often experienced the effects of its presence on our travels through the country, but had never seen it. This proves, better than any musk, the divisibility of matter! The polecat defends itself with no other weapons, and fears hardly any enemy. It taught us not to interfere with unknown things, and to keep away from them even when their appearance

charms us. Lack of this precaution has filled many a region with stench!

"About this place we had to ford a river, the water of which was so high that our horses had to swim, but we crossed it without accident.

"Leaving the State of Kentucky, we arrived, after a few days of travel, at *Somerset*, a catholic station in the State of Ohio. Four years ago, this place had scarcely half a dozen houses, and, perhaps, thirteen German families in the environs. To-day, there are about a hundred dwellings, and a city, with a beautiful square, laid out. This mission, called *St. Joseph's*, is in charge of the Dominican Fathers, and is already attended by so many catholic families, that the church, but lately built, is going to be enlarged this year in order to accommodate them all. In six months, thirty families, mostly Methodists, were gained over to the true church, among them a lawyer of great ability. We remained here two nights.

"Desirous of paying a visit to Mr. Noble, in Virginia, we lost the opportunity of calling on Prince Gallitzin, the venerable missionary priest of Pennsylvania, who more or less expected us. This missionary, of whom I have spoken in former letters, is himself a convert to our holy religion, one of its most able defenders with the pen as well as in the pulpit, and I would not be at all surprised if he were nominated to one of our new dioceses. He is a re-

nowned preacher in English and German, but is troubled with many infirmities.

"We found Mr. Noble, of Virginia, at home; and here my companion had to change horses, his being exhausted. Mr. Noble, commonly called Major Noble, is a recent convert to the catholic church, and deserves to be held up to the best of catholics as an example of submission to the church. The history of his conversion is too interesting to be omitted: A catholic, on his way from Kentucky to Baltimore, stayed all night at Mr. Noble's house, and that gentleman having noticed that his guest did not join the family in prayer before and after supper, asked him the reason of his unchristianlike conduct. The catholic answered, offering him a small volume: "If you will take the pains to read this book, you will know, before my return, the reason of my refusal to join in your prayers." Mr. Noble accepted the offer, and next day the traveler continued his journey. . . . On his return from Baltimore, he inquired of his host whether he had found out the reason of his conduct, and was happily surprised when Major Noble answered in the affirmative, asking, at the same time, what he had to do to become forthwith a member of the catholic church, since, in his opinion, there was no need for further inquiry, and he desired to lose no time. The catholic observed that the fact of having married his first wife's sister might be an obstacle in the way of his conversion; but Mr.

Noble answered promptly and generously that whatever might be required of him, he was ready to do it. The matter was immediately referred to the Vicar-general,* who advised Mr. Noble to separate from his wife until the necessary dispensation would be obtained from Rome. The really *noble* convert complied forthwith with the request, and, to make matters easier, undertook a journey to New Orleans with four or five vessels of merchandise. In about six months the dispensation arrived from Rome and Mr. Noble from New Orleans, and the Vicar-general was requested by both husband and wife (for she became a convert at the same time her husband did) to receive them into the church, and join them in the holy bonds of a lawful marriage. But before this was done, their house was literally stormed by the protestant parsons of the neighborhood, who took the loss of this prominent and most respectable family much to heart. The very day he was received into the church, five ministers came to entreat him to reconsider so rash a resolution, and to prevent his conversion at all hazards.

*Viz., to Father Badin, of whom Father Nerinckx always speaks as "the Vicar-general." Archbishop Spalding gives an entirely different account of Major Noble's conversion, page 180 of his "Sketches of Kentucky," which were edited with the assistance of Father Badin. We must, however, observe that Father Badin was, at the time of the writing of that book (1844), seventy-six years of age, and could scarcely be expected to remember, after a lapse of at least twenty-five years, all the particulars of a not uncommon event, which Father Nerinckx here relates shortly after it had happened.

But Major Noble only answered that he was too well convinced of the truth of the catholic church to remain any longer a slave of their errors, and politely requested them to go away from the house and leave his family in peace. His conversion has been followed by many others. . . . It is not every day we meet with persons of so great a force of character, ready to make such sacrifices and to conquer in a manly way all human respect.

"I desire to notice here another conversion which I do not think I related before. The Rev. Father Rosati, a Lazarist of St. Louis, and Rev. Mr. Chabrat, a priest of Kentucky, who related the incident to me, being at Post Vincennes, in the State of Indiana, met on the streets of that city an old chief of one of the Indian tribes. Approaching them with great respect, the Indian seized Father Rosati by the arm, saying: 'You are the minister of the Great Spirit; I want you to tell me what I have to do to serve Him!' Having secured an interpreter, Mr. Rosati began the conversation by asking him whether he believed in the existence of a Great Spirit? 'Yes,' replied the chief, '*that* I always believed; and I will tell you how I serve Him: On getting up in the morning, raising my hands to heaven (and here he suited the action to the words), I thank Him for having preserved me during the night, and ask Him to help me during the day; at night I thank Him for his protection of the day, and beseech Him

to preserve me from all dangers during the night. Any thing else I know not, and do not; but you are His minister, and you have to tell me what is to be done.' 'Do you know,' further inquired Father Rosati, 'that in that Great Spirit there are three persons, namely: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost?' 'That I did not know,' promptly answered the simple child of the forest; 'but I believe it, because you tell me to. You are His minister, and ought to know.' Father Rosati undertook to instruct the old man carefully for several days, and found him to be an apt scholar, owing to his noble faith. The priest having given him an instruction about baptism, the Indian immediately signified his intense desire to receive the sacrament, putting his hand repeatedly on his head. As soon as he thought the chief sufficiently prepared, the priest delayed no longer, and administered to him that most necessary of sacraments. Scarcely was he baptized, when he was prostrated by a very violent sickness, which caused his death in a very few days. As long as the instructions lasted, and also during the illness, his son and some other Indians were constantly around him. They came in large numbers to assist at the funeral, which was celebrated in the most solemn manner, in the presence of most all the citizens of the place. The ceremonies made a strong and lasting impression upon the Indians, and when they were at an end, the chief's son, together with many of his tribe, came to thank

Father Rosati, kissed his hands, and entreated him to come and live with them, and instruct them as he had done their old father, that they might die as he had done. They finally left, sad, because of the loss of their chief, whom they had much loved and respected; but happy and edified, because of his beautiful death, so full of true courage, resignation, and edification.

"And now allow me a remark. How did this chief know that there was a Great Spirit? He had never fallen into the hands of any fanatic. Who had told him that Father Rosati was the minister of the Great Spirit, since they had never seen one another nor ever spoken one to another. Mr. Rosati was there by chance, for he did not reside in that region, but belonged to the suite of Bishop Dubourg, with whom he now resides, in Louisiana. It seems that this Indian, without book or printing-press, knew fully as much and did more than many a learned scholar of to-day, who, after long study, reading and writing, did not yet find out the Great Spirit, nor learn the prayer of the wild man of the forest. Had this Indian chief fallen into the hands of the great and learned (!) masters, it is likely he would not have died as he did.

"A few years ago, I baptized, when in that region, some of these Indians' children. Although the slaves of many vices and very ignorant, these savages exhibited very good dispositions and had many natural virtues. We traveled through their hunting grounds without molesta-

tion and without being once insulted; there was not the least necessity for a guide; wherever we met them, they were friendly. They were all decently covered, the women especially so. Their jollifications and dances were held among themselves, without the females participating in them; as, for instance, when one hundred and forty of their number came to greet Governor Harrison. After having delivered their address, they sent their women away with the guns which they everywhere carry with them, and performed several dances, after which the women returned. Unhappily, they like very much spirituous liquor, which the whites sell to them for the sake of filthy lucre, and when under the influence of it, they become very cruel. Their wars, carried on between the different tribes, are also very barbarous; and, at such times, woe to the *pale face* who falls into their hands; they torture him in the most atrocious manner.

"Having bid farewell to Mr. Noble, we continued our journey, and two days after arrived at Mr. Thompson's, a very virtuous catholic, living in the great Alleghany Mountains. After breakfast, that gentleman, who lives here with his four children by a second wife, invited us to inspect the church which he is building on his own farm and at his own expense, the few catholic families in the neighborhood being poor. He thinks the building will cost no less than $10,000, and he added that he was going to sell part of his lands to be enabled to finish the church, which

is now raised up to the windows. Being somewhat of an architect, Mr. Thompson* made the plan himself. It is in the form of a dome, and pleases me better than any church I have yet seen in America. He also offers land for a priest and school, and it seems that Father Dubois, the founder of Emmettsburg, is going to accept the offer. The church will be dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

"The conduct and generosity of this catholic gentleman are seldom imitated in Europe, even by the richest of catholics. It is then very unjustly, that all our American Catholics are looked upon as ungenerous and unwilling to contribute to the spiritual wants of the church. For, if you notice the number and diversity of buildings mentioned above, you can not but see that, since the time Archbishop Carroll, who has now been dead five years, first became Bishop, many have been the sacrifices made by catholics. Before that time they were continually oppressed and persecuted in the true sense of the word, and that lamentable state of things only came to an end with the Revolution. Of course, we acknowledge that here, like in Europe, not all who profess to be catholics dare practice their religion faithfully. Surely not; and the uninterrupted immigration from the Old World is little calculated to brighten our hopes. . . . Hence,

*This is the Mr. Thompson to whom Rev. Nerinckx refers in his letter to the Archbishop of Baltimore in the previous chapter.

gifts from Europe will always be gratefully accepted; for this country is so vast, that there is no end to our needs. We have to work in a wilderness, as it were, in which many articles, such as books, statues, silks, etc., are not to be had, even if we had the money with which to purchase them.

"It may be worth a passing notice, that Mr. Thompson lives on the road from Wheeling to Baltimore, which is to be a twenty mile stone road, sixty feet wide, right through the mountains and rock; three hundred Irishmen, mostly catholics, have undertaken the job, and have to finish it by the month of August of this year. A similar stone road is resolved upon from Louisville to Pittsburg, a distance of more than five hundred miles. Over eighty steamboats are constantly plying up and down the Ohio; some averaging three hundred and even five hundred ton; going down stream they run at the rate of two hundred miles in twenty-four hours, and not unfrequently reach New Orleans, a distance of one thousand two hundred miles, in five days. Many rivers are being provided with locks to make them navigable; canals are being made for communication between the lakes, rivers, and sea; the building up of numerous cities, and public improvements are being pushed ahead with incredible spirit. But these matters are not of the sphere of my letter, in which I wish to treat of ecclesiastical matters only.

"Leaving Mr. Thompson, we continued our journey, and arrived on the Wednesday of Holy Week in Emmettsburg, Maryland, founded by Rev. Mr. Dubois, a Sulpitian. Forty young men, attending the college which he instituted here, had made their first communion the Palm Sunday previous. The situation of the college on the mountain is very picturesque; the discipline of the institution is edifying; many of the scholars, who also pursue the studies of philosophy and theology, are from the West Indies. The Sisters of Charity also have an academy here, and are doing well. Both institutions have about a hundred scholars.

"Proceeding on our journey (the weather continued cold), we arrived on Thursday night in *Fredericktown*, at the house of Rev. Father Malavé, an old acquaintance. This zealous missionary has recently bought a house, which he intends altering into a school for the education of children whose parents are unable to pay. A married man with his family lives in the house, with the understanding that he has to teach the poor children.

"Having passed through *Montgomery Court-House*, a little town where Rev. De Vos is stationed, we arrived at *Georgetown*, fifty miles from Fredericktown, in time to celebrate Easter. Here we admired the flourishing condition of the Society of Jesus, which counts over fifty members, and of their beautiful college, accommo-

dating about a hundred students. At the college I had the pleasure of an introduction to and conversation with Mr. Barber, the converted preacher of whom I spoke to you before. He is studying theology; his conduct is exemplary, and his progress in study surprising. He can not but wonder now, how the truth so clearly demonstrated in his authors, can be so persistently denied by the enemies of the church, and when he reflects how long he remained in ignorance, he is truly ashamed of himself. His only son, a boy of about twelve years, pursues his studies at the same college. We also paid a visit to Mrs. Barber, the wife of the Jesuit Father just mentioned; she made her solemn vows at the Convent of the Visitation, near the church where Mr. De Theux is pastor. This convent was established by the recently deceased Archbishop L. Neale, has fifty religious, and keeps, besides the boarders, among whom are Mrs. Barber's three little daughters, a school for day scholars and one for poor children. I was also told that Mr. Barber's father and mother joined the church recently. The father, also a protestant minister, tries to bring more into the true fold by writing pamphlets. He is living in Massachusetts,* and his writings had one good effect:

* Daniel Barber, A. M., born at Salisbury, Conn., October 2, 1756, was originally a Congregationalist minister. His youngest sister married Noah Tyler, and became the mother of Bishop Tyler, of Hartford. In 1807 he baptized in his sect Miss Allen, daughter of General Ethan Allen, who subsequently became a convert, and joined the community of Hospital Sisters of the Hotel

Many families have already adopted all the catholic practices they know of, and evince a great desire to assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. There are few or no catholics in that State; the young Barber will likely be sent there as soon as ordained, and will be the first priest ever sent into that part of the country.

"During our three days' stay at Georgetown, we crossed over to *Washington*, the capital of the United States, contiguous to this city, in order to obtain our passports. We were treated with much civility, and our papers signed by Mr. Adams, Secretary of State, were given us gratis and without delay. Whilst here, we went to see St. Patrick's catholic church, which,

Dieu in Montreal, where she piously died, in 1819. Mr. Barber became an Episcopalian minister at Schenectady, N. Y., at thirty years of age, and continued to act as such, first at Manchester, Vt., then at Claremont, N. H., for thirty years. His youngest son, Virgil, born in 1782, was a parson in Fairfield, N. Y., in 1816; coming to visit his father, he read some catholic books, which the latter had borrowed from Bishop Cheverus. Before his father saw him again, Virgil and his family had become converts the same year. Virgil had been to Rome in 1817; on his return, in 1818, his wife had become a nun, at the Visitation, Georgetown, and he himself was preparing for the priesthood. He visited his father in Claremont in 1818, and made converts of his father and sister, and of his aunt, Mrs. Tyler, and the latter's eldest daughter. He then went to Georgetown, and subsequently returned to Claremont, where he remained until the death of his wife in 1825. Daniel Barber still lived in 1834. Father Virgil H. Barber, S. J., died in Georgetown College, March 27, 1847, at the age of sixty-five. His wife, Mrs. Jerusha Booth Barber, born at New Town, Conn., July 20, 1789, in religion Sister Mary Augustine, died at Summerville, near Mobile, Ala., on the night of January 1, 1860. Their only son, Samuel, became a Jesuit, and their four daughters entered the convent.

upon my first arrival in America, consisted of a square frame building in very poor condition; it is now a handsome church of freestone, accommodating three thousand people. The funeral service for the Duke de Berry had just been held in the presence of all the foreign ambassadors and of the most prominent members of the United States Congress, which was just then holding its sessions. Rev. Father Kenney, Visitor of the Jesuits, and an Irishman of uncommon eloquence, preached the funeral oration, to the admiration and delight of all present. That same day had been appointed by Congress to render funeral honors to Admiral Decatur, whose unfortunate death* had just occurred, and who had reaped so much glory during the war with England; but they adjourned the ceremony in order to assist at the services in the catholic church.

"Rev. Mr. Chabrat here disposed of his horse, and went by stage to Baltimore, a distance of forty-five miles. I kept mine, although it has but one eye, (and I hope to find it in Baltimore at my return,) because it is gentle and strong, and especially because I can not now afford to buy another. Horses that can stand plenty of work and travel are the only ones worth having for a missionary priest. Before going to Baltimore, I paid a flying visit to *White Marsh*, the novitiate of the Jesuits, where I arrived the Wednesday after Easter. I found many

* He fell in a duel with Commodore James Barron.

changes: the church is considerably enlarged, and they had about thirteen novices at the time.

"I had only thirty miles more to travel to reach *Baltimore.* Coming from White Marsh on to the main road to that city, you get a fine view of the catholic metropolis, which, viewed from a distance of five or six miles, seems to hang on the mountain side. The first object that strikes the eye is the majestic metropolitan church overlooking the whole city, and the dome of which required over three hundred and fifty thousand feet of cut stone above the roof, other stones and materials not included. In that dome are two principal rooms, one of which is destined for the library of the archdiocese. Archbishop Maréchal, a Sulpitian, formerly professor of the Seminary of Lyons, France, and lately rector of the Seminary of Baltimore, has already donated all his books to that library. This metropolitan church, without doubt the most important building of the kind in this part of America, will, exclusively of gratuitous gifts and interior ornaments, cost over $250,000. The Archbishop hopes to have it ready for services by the 15th of August, feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the patron feast of the archdiocese.*

"The young men of Lyons† have given notice

*It was not dedicated till May 31, 1821, having been begun by Archbishop Carroll eighteen years before. Cfr. "The Catholic Church in the United States," by Henry de Courcy, pg. 110.

†The Latin inscription on the altar states that this altar was presented by "priests of Marseilles, to Ambrose, Archbishop of

to the Archbishop of their intention to present to his metropolitan church a high altar of white marble; the King of France is going to send him a beautiful bell.

"A few months ago, died in Baltimore a sailor, who, after having lived many years as an habitual drunkard, invested his last $50 in a lottery, the highest premium of which was $50,000. Desiring to satisfy his craving appetite for drink, he soon afterward offered to sell his tickets for $10, but he could find nobody willing to buy them, and he was obliged to await the result of the lottery. To his amazement, he gained the highest prize, and began his life of debauchery anew. Finally he fell sick, and died about a month after, having passed his last days in deploring the excesses of his past life. By his will, he left $10,000 to the metropolitan cathedral and $5,000 to St. Patrick's parish church. The lesson given by this drunkard, brought by sickness to reason, temperance, and faith, has few followers even among the more pious.

"Close by the metropolitan church, the Unitarians or Socinians have erected their first

Baltimore, formerly their professor of theology." Archbishop Maréchal taught in Lyons, St. Flour, and Aix; whether he did at Marseilles we have seen nowhere stated. May be those priests of Marseilles studied under him at Lyons, or Father Nerinckx, hearing of the promised altar by the Archbishop's old students, and not knowing of his teaching in Marseilles, took it for granted that the Lyons old seminarians were al luded to.

meeting-house in a very neat and tasty style; but they have miscalculated. The building costs $60,000; it has broken two or three of their best houses, and now belongs to the bank that lent them the money. The architect, a Frenchman whom I met here in London, did not fare any better. He lost all his property, and his only daughter died on the way to Europe; the poor man feels the latter more keenly than all his other losses. Such are sometimes the judgments of God.

"I should have remarked that, when they commenced building the metropolitan church, it was entirely out of town, there being only a few houses scattered around it. Situated about five minutes' walk from *St. Patrick's Point*, it will be very near the center of the city, if the latter is built up as it is now laid out.

"We had reached Baltimore on Thursday, and found there a vessel ready to sail for Rotterdam the Sunday following. We had traveled a whole month on horseback and suffered much, and had scarcely time to purchase a few necessary things; but our taking the desired and much needed rest would have delayed us too long, and we embarked very early on Sunday morning. We were the only two passengers, had a good captain and tolerably good sailors, so that we enjoyed a very pleasant trip after the usual course of sea-sickness was gone through. Having experienced five severe, though not very dangerous storms, we arrived before Dover the

twenty-ninth day, and resolved to land, and pay a visit to my brother and sister and their school for the poor in Somerstown, London. A carriage took us to the English capital early in the morning, having made seventy-two miles in nine hours.

"Although London is a wild world, we soon found out that many there serve the Lord in retirement and devotion. The catholics attend faithfully to the services in their churches; and the poor, who are numerous here, are helped with a generous liberality. The poor schools are very much favored, and it is worthy of note that the Duke of Sussex, brother to the king, kindly consented to preside at the dinner which is annually given for the benefit of the Somerstown poor schools, where none but catholic children of the poorest class are educated. No ladies are invited to those dinners, and everybody pays his fare. After dinner, and a speech by one of the invited guests, the poor children are presented to the assembly by their teachers, and every one gives liberally. Such a dinner realizes sometimes as high as six or seven hundred pounds sterling.

"We bought a good supply of English catholic books, which can be had here better than anywhere else, but at high prices. We also subscribed to the *Catholicon* and *Orthodox*, two catholic journals edited by laymen, and entirely devoted to the interests of our holy faith. These papers are well established and count many

regular subscribers in America. The world-renowned Bishop Milner, one of the most learned writers of the kingdom, is a regular correspondent of one of them.

"I also profited of this opportunity, and had the rules of our Loretto Society printed here.*

"In London I met Mrs. Hill, who, some years ago, lived with Mr. Hill, her husband, at their castle of Bornhem, Belgium. They are both English, and converts to the catholic faith. After having lived some years together, they have separated, by mutual consent, to lead a life of greater perfection. Mr. Hill became a Dominican in Rome, celebrated his first Mass in that city last Christmas, and is preparing to join the Dominicans in Kentucky.

"Whilst here, we also heard of an incident of peculiar interest, which happened on the feast of *Corpus Christi*, this being the day on which the House takes the *test oath*, as the oath by which the members are required to deny the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament and the doctrine of transubstantiation, is commonly called. One of the noble Lords having made a few remarks on the object of that oath, based on the pretense that catholics by their act of adoration of this sacrament are guilty

*The full title is as follows: "Rules of the Society and School of Loretto, Kentucky. London. Printed by Keating and Brown, printers to the Rt. Rev., the Vicars Apostolic of England, 38 Duke street, Grosvenor Square. 1820," pgg. 48.

of idolatry, said, in the course of his speech, that it became necessary to know what they were actually swearing to. Said he: 'To swear about things which we do not sufficiently know, would make us guilty of an inconsiderate and rash oath. If the catholics truly believe that Jesus Christ is really present in that sacrament, it is Christ—that is, *God*—whom they adore, hence they are *not* guilty of idolatry. But,' concluded the noble Lord, 'if it is true that catholics are idolaters, then all I can say is, that the Pope has gained a complete victory over the Almighty;' giving his colleagues to understand that this idolatry was scattered broadcast over the whole world, since catholics are to be found everywhere in ever increasing numbers. The English have now sent Bishops and priests to their colonies and give them pecuniary support!

"In London, we also admired the new catholic church of Moorefield. I also visited the English church of St. Paul. This building is monumental, but can certainly not compare with St. Peter's of Rome, or the Duomo of Milan. I am even of the opinion that the Metropolitan church of Baltimore, crowning the city and hill, appears to better advantage than St. Paul's, which stands very low."

After having remained a few days in London, Father Nerinckx set out for Belgium. He took the greatest precautions not to have his advent there publicly heralded, as it had been the first

time he revisited the land of his birth. The fact of his having taken with him several young men, some of whom were liable to military conscription, made him fear that his movements, during this second visit, would be watched with suspicion by the governmental authorities. On this account, also, he deemed it prudent to avoid any thing that might prove an occasion of offense to the civil officers, and, during his stay in Belgium, he selected retired places of abode.

The letters which Bishop Flaget had intrusted him with, with a view of obtaining help for the Kentucky missions, and the letter of thanks from the Sisters of Loretto, a translation of which we give below, he circulated privately among his friends; and they had, if not the success which would have attended their publication in print, the desired effect of stimulating anew the generosity of Father Nerinckx' countrymen.

LETTER OF BISHOP FLAGET.

"BARDSTOWN, *February* 8, 1820.

"*To my Benefactors of Belgium:*

"If people of the world would think it a breach of all the rules of politeness not to acknowledge a service rendered, of what great fault would not priests, and especially a Bishop, be guilty, if they failed in a duty so consonant to reason and so much recommended by our holy faith.

"Although I am conscious of having but very

few of the episcopal virtues, yet I feel that I have a grateful heart; and I can say, in all truth, that I take, perhaps, more pleasure in publishing the favors done to me, than charitable souls have in showing them to me. My generous benefactors in Flanders may then rest assured that neither I nor my faithful co-operators will ever forget them; that their names are deeply engraved in our hearts, and that they are inscribed in the annals of the Loretto convent, the sisters of which, worthy of the first centuries of the church by their austerity and their fervor, make it their special duty to pray every day for those who have so liberally helped them.

"Independently of the sweet satisfaction that we feel in obliging sensible and grateful souls, how many merits do not those charitable persons secure in the eyes of a God, who does not let a glass of cold water go without its reward? These great motives will, I trust, enkindle anew the fire of charity in the hearts of all my generous benefactors of Flanders; and they will give new proofs of it to their countryman, Mr. Nerinckx, my zealous and fervent co-operator.

"Convinced of their good will toward me, I thank them, not only for what they may do for my diocese, but even for what they would have the intention of doing; and I shall not cease to pray to God to reward them a hundred fold in

this world and in the next, and I subscribe myself their

"Very devoted and very grateful servant,

"† BENEDICT JOSEPH FLAGET,

"*Bishop of Bardstown.*"

"The little Loretto Society," writes Father Nerinckx, "grateful for the kindness shown them, and the share they had in the distribution of church ornaments for their little chapel, profit of this opportunity to testify their gratitude to their benefactors by sending letters of association to all those who took a part in what has been provided for themselves or for the diocese of Bardstown, the welfare of which their institute obliges them to have especially at heart."

LETTER OF ASSOCIATION.

†

Mary.

"Sister Mary, Sister Ann, Sister Juliana, and Sister Helen, Superiors of the Houses of the *Society of the Friends of Mary* in the State of Kentucky, United States of America.

"To the gentlemen and ladies, our kind and religious well-wishers:

"All hail and blessing from THE SUFFERING JESUS and His SORROWFUL MOTHER!!

"Although the law of charity commands us to pray for all men, we think ourselves obliged to do it in a more particular manner for those who

have shown their zeal for the promotion of our institute, and a special wish for our remembrances. Knowing then, most respected and honored gentlemen and ladies, this to be your case and disposition, we very gladly send you our letters of gratitude and *association*, trusting, notwithstanding our own unworthiness, upon the infinite merits of our Dying Saviour and His afflicted Mother, our Head and Patroness. We do promise you that, during life and after your death, you shall have a share in all the devotions and pious works in the houses of our *society*.

"We also hope, most honored and respected gentlemen and ladies, that we will find a place in your holy performances. Having been informed of your names and qualities, they are, and shall be on our records as a blessed memorial during the existence of our society. These, our engagements and wishes, we humbly request our Reverend Father to communicate to you in the name of

"Your most humble servants,

"The Sisters of Loretto Society

AS ABOVE.

"Done at Loretto, 10th of January, 1820, the eighth (year) of the institute." *

"I would desire," continues Father Nerinckx, "all persons who, through their good wishes, have obtained this right of association, to consider themselves associates. It was my desire to send to every one individually a copy of these

* Copied literally from the printed narrative of 1825.

letters in the usual form, as the old religious communities used to do; but, by a special act of liberality (!) and humanity (!) of the government, I am deprived of that happiness. I trust, however, that the benefits of this association will not suffer from it, since they are out of the sphere of the government power."

Father Nerinckx subsequently gave an account of his success in the following letter, the only one that reached Loretto from Belgium. It is one of the few English documents in Father Nerinckx' handwriting, and we give it as written in all its energetic simplicity and freshness of faulty diction:

LETTER OF FATHER NERINCKX.

†

Mary.

"2*d of November*, 1820.

"*Dear Mother, Beloved Mothers, and Sisters of the Society:*

"The peace of our Lord JESUS be with you all!

"Your letter of August 13th left Bardstown the 19th, and was handed safe to me, October 28th, the only one I received. The Right Rev. Bishop wrote twice. Rev. Mr. Chabrat, who is well, sends me word middling regular. By these letters I understood that Sister Apollonia departed this life and is gone to heaven. We thank God for his blessings. The more I consider the world, the less I doubt of the true

happiness and salvation of the Friends of Mary. O Blessed Mother of God! that has afforded you the means of these double comforts!

"To follow the contents of your letter: I thank you for all the pious and kind remembrances which I, on my side, have tried to keep up. Your good wish for my return is an effect of good nature and grace, but can not profit you much; still, my superiors here advise me for it. I willingly prepare, in the sixtieth year of my age, to cross the seas again, to do what I can, and to help you, if possible. My condition, as I told you often beforehand, could not fail, in a country now become heretic, and of course filled with all its evil consequences, to suffer mightily in its undertaking. Providence, still, has not entirely forsaken us. Should I have gotten nothing else, but the old English books, with some new ones, if they come on safe, they will be worth my pains. I have ready half a dozen statues, or rather half ones, of our Lady, middling well done, and some more utensils for the church; some more things, and valuable ones, are sent to our Bishop, yet on the road, if I do not mistake, for they may have arrived by this time.

"You have, it seems, received none of my letters; yet I wrote to you three times. I feel sorry for your sickly company; I beg them all to be of good heart and receive these afflictions with courage, united with body and mind with the Suffering Jesus and the Sorrowful Mary. I have thought, sometimes, that your dwelling in

the basement under the chapel might be against your health; if there is any possibility of doing so, I want you to live in the large building.

"I thank God for the favors he bestows on the community and visitors through the intercession of Blessed St. Francis Hieronymo. Keep on venerating this holy friend of God and ours.*

"A great favor is just now bestowed upon the whole christendom: We received here a Breve of the Holy Father announcing that the body of St. Francis of Assisium (who is represented in our Loretto chapel,) has been found with the sacred stigmata, whole and fresh. It had been buried for nearly six hundred years, nor did anybody know the exact place where it had been hidden. A few months ago it was found, after fifty-two days of digging and searching for it, under the altar of the lower of the three churches of Assisium, built one above the other. Favors and indulgences will be granted on this occasion. Every christian wonders that, in a time of general apostasy as this is, this remarkable favor should be granted, and they hope for some great event which will turn to the benefit of the church.

*Among the many statues and pictures which Father Nerinckx brought from Europe in 1817, was one of that saint, which Father Nerinckx told the sisters to place in the infirmary, the inmates of which he wanted to look upon St. Francis Hieronymo as their patron and best doctor. Many cures, believed to be supernatural, were effected through his intercession, and are worked to this day.

"The poor school of my brother and sister in London is improving fast; over one hundred children attend it. They have been much pleased with the tidings from ours; they keep some of our rules, and wish to join with you in prayers, good works, and pious remembrances. Several new houses in this country wish to do the same. Some new societies have been started here, but, besides the risks they run from governmental interference, I fear (and so do many prudent men here,) that their wealthy and too worldly fixings will make them of but short duration, howsoever pious they appear to be. Your ways of living are stricter and poorer, and that much more religious and safe because founded more on piety and charity.

"I received letters from Rome concerning your society, telling me that the Right Reverend Bishop of Kentucky has received ample instructions upon the rules, some of which they wish to be altered. I wrote to the Bishop about it, and I expect he has fixed business. Be you obedient and faithful; you see how short time is, how serious the matter, and, withal, how long blessed eternity. May not one of you miss it! Your rules are printed in London; but, since the answers from Rome, some will have to be altered.

"I hope Providence protects you in temporals, so as to have first necessaries; with these we must be satisfied. The help I will give, will be of little account; the persecution

here ruins me entirely; but God wants no means of assistance. Rev. Mr. Abell's sickness has caused a sensible grief. I hope that, by this time, he is well again, as I wish you all to be. I am well myself, thank God!—in fact, more so than I desire, for I am growing heavy, notwithstanding my continual labors and travels on foot. Rev. Mr. Badin has the care of two parishes in France; his return to America is doubtful. Rev. Mr. Hill, a convert and now a Dominican, comes from Rome with six other Dominicans, and wishes to start with me next Spring for Kentucky. We will likely come together shortly after Easter, if there be any vessels, so to be with you about the end of June. I thought of coming before Winter, but my well-wishers desired me to stay, and business hinders my departure. I hope all our acquaintances and persons attached to our houses fare well, and things go on, if not in grand style, at least piously and christianly. Receive here, all God's blessings, my hearty wishes and true marks of sincere affection, and love in Jesus and Mary.

"C. NERINCKX,

"*Your father, as you are willing to call me, to my great confusion.*

"P. S. Greet your gentlemen confessors in particular.

"Should the Bishop not have received my letters, (I wrote several to him,) you let him pe-

ruse this, accompanied with my deepest respect for his person and character.

"Particular greeting to Mr. and Mrs. Dent; to Mr. Leak and lady; to Mr. Vincent, Polly, Mr. Cassel and lady, etc. Whites and blacks, to whom all good things.

"I wrote you a letter from Baltimore, after I had been at the Visitation; one long one from the vessel, and a long one from this country. My well-wishers here I recommend to your special devotions. Best things to all the scholars everywhere."

CHAPTER XXVI.

1820–1821.

FATHER NERINCKX' RETURN TO KENTUCKY.—HOW THE ORIGINAL FOUNDERS OF THE JESUIT MISSION IN MISSOURI CAME TO THE UNITED STATES.—SKETCH OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MISSOURI PROVINCE.—HIGH MASS OF THANKSGIVING IN BALTIMORE CATHEDRAL.

EVER fearful lest he should be arrested, and see the fruits to be reaped from this visit destroyed, Father Nerinckx moved about without ostentation, unknown to all but his intimate friends. Without attracting too much attention to his movements, he gathered all the presents or purchases he could conveniently carry along; but he had to refuse a valuable library offered to him by an aged pastor, lest the gift might put the officials of the government on his track. It was also to prevent any such unwelcome interference that his arrangements for returning to the United States, for the shipping of various objects, such as vestments, books, and the like, which he acquired by purchase or donation, were all effected through a tobacco merchant of Mechlin, named Ketelaer, who had business connections in Antwerp and Amsterdam.*

* The following reliable narrative has been kindly contributed to our work by Rev. Walter H. Hill, S. J., of St. Louis Univer-

As we saw in our last chapter, Father Nerinckx on his way to Europe, in 1820, passed by Georgetown College, in the District of Columbia, where he met with Oliver Vandevelde, S. J., a young Belgian, who, as already remarked, had accompanied him on his return to the United States, in 1817. Among the letters of which

sity, who gleaned his facts from conversations held at various times with the venerable Father Van Assche, and committed them to writing. Father Van Assche retained a lively remembrance of the events here detailed and described as told by him in 1873. He died, whilst this work was in preparation, June 26, 1877, from the effects of a stroke of paralysis which he experienced, just a month before, on his way to a sick call at St. Stanislaus novitiate, Missouri, in his seventy-eighth year. Mr. Van Assche was ordained a priest in 1827, and assumed, two years later, the regular charge of the congregation of St. Ferdinand, at the village of Florissant. This congregation had been for a year in charge of the Trappists, who gave it up in 1810, removing to Monk's Mound, on Cahokia Creek, Illinois. When the monks left Illinois in 1813, to return to Europe, Rev. Dunand, a member of their order, remained in Missouri and had charge of the congregation at Florissant for some seven years, residing a part of that time in the village. His congregation was afterward under the care of Rev. Mr. De Lacroix, from 1820 to 1823, during which time he built the present brick church of that place. In 1823, Mr. De Lacroix made over the church to the Jesuit Fathers, under whose charge it has remained till the present time. In 1823, Father Van Assche began to reside at Florissant. He lived a couple of years at Portage des Sioux; but, by advice of his physicians, he returned to Florissant in 1840, and, with the exception of three years' residence at St. Charles, he made it his home till his death. Father Van Assche lived fifty-four years of his long life in Missouri; and, except two short visits, one to Cincinnati and one to Chicago, he never, in that time, went beyond St. Louis and St. Charles counties. He was a man of God, and, full of days and full of merit, he expired calmly in the arms of his brethren. May he rest in peace!

Father Nerinckx was made the bearer to Europe, was one from Mr. Vandevelde, of Georgetown College, to Judocus Francis Van Assche, a youth who was then a student in the Seminary of Mechlin. Mr. Vandevelde had formerly been the tutor of young Van Assche, and, on his departure for the United States in 1817, his pupil would have accompanied him, had not his youth and the lack of means rendered such a step impracticable at that time. The desire of joining his friend in America, however, the ardent youth never renounced, though he divulged it to no one previously to the arrival of Father Nerinckx.

Father Nerinckx delivered this letter from Mr. Vandevelde for young Van Assche to the parents of the youth; they dwelt in the village of St. Amand, about four leagues from Mechlin. On reading this letter, addressed to their son, they at first thought of suppressing it and keeping its contents secret. But, on reflection, the father changed his mind, visited his son at Mechlin, delivered to him the communication from his friend in America, remarking, however, that "there was no good sense in his thinking of going to America; that there was plenty of good to be done at home; that Mr. Vandevelde, who was striving to entice him away, was of a roving disposition, and had tried to induce a cousin of young Van Assche to go as a missionary to England," etc. To all these arguments, that were prompted by the natural affection of a

father, the son said little in reply; but he kept the letter, and read, and reread it with avidity. The letter informed him that if he still had a mind of coming to America, Father Nerinckx' return from Europe, in the following year, would furnish him a favorable opportunity to accomplish his purpose. This communication from Mr. Vandevelde was handed to young Van Assche about the end of July, in 1820. At the beginning of the following vacation, he determined to find Father Nerinckx, if possible, and, with this intention, he visited Rev. Mr. Ver Loo, a pious priest, who resided about two leagues from Mechlin, and was supposed to know the hiding-place of the illustrious missionary from America. He was accompanied to Rev. Mr. Ver Loo's house by a young fellow-seminarian named John B. Elet. Rev. Mr. Ver Loo had once been a professor at the Seminary of Mechlin, and was subsequently the president, and to him young Elet was much attached. On the way to the residence of the holy priest, Van Assche revealed to Elet his design of going to America in company with Father Nerinckx; young Elet declared without hesitation that he, too, would go along with him. His friend, Van Assche, put little reliance, at the time, on a resolution which seemed to be so inconsiderately taken; yet subsequent events proved it to have been no merely passing notion. Rev. Mr. Ver Loo could not give the information sought for, but he accompanied the young visitors to the

pastor of a neighboring church, who told them that Father Nerinckx was, perhaps, with his aunt, who was superioress of a hospital in Mechlin. Van Assche visited alone the hospital in Mechlin, carrying with him, as a passport, the letter from Mr. Vandevelde, S. J., addressed under care of Rev. Charles Nerinckx, and inquired of the superioress if her reverend nephew was then her guest. She answered that he could, most likely, be found at the hospital in Dendermonde, over which another of his aunts was superioress. Dendermonde is about two leagues from St. Amand, where the parents of young Van Assche resided. He went home to his parents at St. Amand, but he still said nothing to them at all concerning his intention of going to America. After some days spent at home, he went to the hospital at Dendermonde, with his letter having Father Nerinckx' name superscribed as its bearer from America, and asked for the superioress. When she presented herself, he stated that he desired to see Father Nerinckx, who, he had been informed, was with her, handing her, at the same time, the letter. She examined the superscription carefully, and, without making any reply, went out of the parlor with the letter. Father Nerinckx entered a few minutes afterward. When young Van Assche made known his desire of accompanying the holy missionary to America, he said in answer: "I can do nothing for you. My situation is very

precarious. I am suspected by the government authorities, and I must be exceedingly cautious, even to escape arrest and imprisonment. However, if you are resolved on going to America, it is not for me to prevent your doing so; the vessel in which I came will probably start on its return trip next May" (1821). Young Van Assche determined at once in his own mind to go with Father Nerinckx to America on this vessel.

When classes were resumed at the Seminary of Mechlin in September of 1820, young Van Assche and his friend Elet returned to prosecute their studies. Van Assche said nothing for a time to any other fellow-seminarian of Father Nerinckx, or of his own purpose of going to America, but he thought anxiously of different schemes for procuring the means necessary to accomplish his object. He did not board at the Seminary, but at a private house near the great Seminary; for, at that time, the number of students was so great that the Seminary was not sufficiently capacious to lodge all of them. There were three seminarians who boarded at the same house with Van Assche, and, during the course of the Autumn, he manifested to them his intention of going to America with Father Nerinckx, but he confessed his embarrassment with regard to the method of obtaining the money which would be necessary for effecting his aim. One of the companions in the boarding-house—a Mr. Van Loo—said to him:

"If you are in earnest, I can tell you how to procure the means for the journey." He proceeded to inform him that Mr. De Neff, of Turnhout, would surely furnish him with what he needed, if rightly asked to do so.

This Mr. De Neff had been a linen-draper, and amassed a fortune. He was a cultivated scholar, and was, withal, a man of solid piety. At the death of his wife, he discontinued all mercantile pursuits, and, as he had no responsibility after the demise of his worthy spouse, but one child—a daughter—and she was amply provided for, he thought seriously of becoming a priest. This well-meant project, however, he was induced, by prudent advisers, to abandon. He shortly afterward devoted a portion of his fortune to founding and maintaining a college at Turnhout,* in which young men of limited

* Rev. Peter J. Aernoudt, S. J., (known by the English form of his name—*Arnold*,) who wrote the "Following of the Sacred Heart of Jesus," was a scholar of St. Joseph's College, Turnhout, then under the direction of Mr. Peter De Neff, in 1832. Mr. De Neff held the direction of that college for many years longer, when he confided it to the Fathers of the Society of Jesus.

This good and pious man did all in his power to educate his young pupils in the fear and love of God. Most of his scholars became zealous priests or devoted religious. His greatest joy was to have some devote themselves to the American missions. Hence his love and veneration for Rev. Father Nerinckx.

Father Aernoudt was born in Moere, West Flanders, Belgium, in 1811. He first took private lessons with a priest of his native village, went to the College of Thielt in 1830, and thence to Mr. De Neff's college in 1832. He there completed his studies, and entered the Society of Jesus, December 31, 1835. He left for America, September 24, 1836, landed in New York, November 16, and reached St. Louis, Missouri, December 2, of the same

means might acquire the preparatory education requisite for entering the seminaries, and, in this college, he himself taught a regular class.* Mr. De Neff subsequently rendered aid to indigent missions in the United States, and he was a special benefactor to his Belgian countrymen who first established the Jesuit mission of Missouri, in 1823. The Mr. Van Loo above mentioned had been educated at Mr. De Neff's college, and hence the confidence with which he assured his young friend of relief from his difficulties by this munificent gentleman.

Young Elet had as room-mate at his boarding-house a fellow-student, named John B. Smedts, to whom he communicated the agreement made by himself and Van Assche to go with Father

year. He made his novitiate at St. Stanislaus, taught in several colleges, and became a priest in 1843. His great devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, intensified during a dangerous sickness from which he recovered, led him to write his "Following of the Sacred Heart of Jesus," completed in 1846. The manuscript, approved by his superiors in Rome, was mislaid and lost for fifteen years; hence the long delay of its publication. Father Desmet and Right Rev. J. B. Purcell, Archbishop of Cincinnati, had a great veneration for the man of God. Father Aernoudt made his solemn vows in 1854; he lived twenty-nine years in the United States, and died at St. Louis University, July 26, 1865.—C. P. Maes.

* It is said that, when Mr. De Neff was compelled by duty or illness to absent himself from the class-room, his accomplished daughter Mary took his place, and that she fulfilled the office of temporary professor, both with much credit to herself, and with great profit to her disciples. She led the life of a pious maiden in the world, performing magnificent works of charity, in imitation of her generous father, and died at an advanced age a few years ago.

Nerinckx to America in the following Spring. Young Smedts expressed at once his resolution also to be one of the party. With this new accession, Van Assche was in due time made acquainted, and these two, Van Assche and Smedts, filled with pleasant expectations, visited Mr. De Neff, at Turnhout, bearing with them a letter of introduction from Mr. Van Loo, a former pupil of Mr. De Neff's college. They were received kindly by Mr. De Neff, who commended their undertaking; he assured them also that but for the want of available money, his ready means having been exhausted by heavy outlays recently made in building, he would, with much pleasure to himself, furnish them all they needed for the journey. As it was he gave them some money, and wrote for them letters of introduction to priests and presidents of seminaries in Holland, where, he felt confident, they would succeed in obtaining the requisite assistance; and, meanwhile, he invited them to make his house their home whenever they happened to be at Turnhout, or in its vicinity. After some respite, Messrs. Van Assche and Smedts started to Holland, to which they traveled all the way on foot, going directly to Bois-le-Duc. At the Seminary of Bois-le-Duc they were received cordially by the president, Rev. Mr. Van Gills, who spoke in their behalf to the professors and the seminarians, and he also gave them letters to some pastors of neighboring churches from whom, he judged, they might expect aid.

A few months later, Messrs. Van Assche and Elet went over the same grounds in quest of means for their proposed trip to America, but the amount collected by the youthful mendicants during both these journeys, when all taken together, was not adequate to their wants. They saw the necessity of resorting to other plans for supplying the deficiency, and with this view, they resolved to sell their books, furniture, pianos, watches, and the like. But there was a difficulty in the way of this business transaction, arising from the circumstance that all was to be done secretly, and only with friends who were trustworthy; for, it must be observed, that even their parents were wholly ignorant of their intended journey to America with Father Nerinckx, or that they thought of taking such a step at all. They succeeded in selling, or rather in pawning, their movable wares and chattels for about one-half their value, but only by giving their assurance that the amount advanced on these objects would ultimately be refunded by their parents.

As already observed, there was at that time in Mechlin a wealthy tobacco-merchant named Ketelaer, who had business connections in Antwerp and Amsterdam, and these merchants were fully posted as to all the arrangements made by the ship on which Father Nerinckx had come to Belgium, and on which he was to return to America. Mr. Ketelaer took peculiar pleasure in giving the youthful adventurers all information

and assistance, and with him they deposited their money, and stored the luggage which they were to carry with them to America. Henceforth, besides giving them all necessary directions, he kept them informed as to the progress of all preparations made by the vessel for its departure.

At this period of the undertaking, Mr. Peter J. Verhaegen got knowledge of it and joined the trio; and a little later, Mr. Felix L. Verreydt, Mr. De Maillet, Mr. Van Horsick, who were seminarians, and a Rev. Mr. Veulman, who, though still in the Seminary, had been ordained priest, all asked to be associated in the enterprise; and finally, at a still later date, Peter J. Desmet was added to their number. Each of the new recruits made his own arrangements to provide means for the journey, the original trio having already completed all necessary preparations of this kind.

The vessel, instead of starting from Amsterdam in May, as at first announced, delayed its departure till August. Meanwhile, the prospective missionaries to a foreign land went on with their scholastic employments at the Seminary as usual, keeping their proceedings secret from all save a few trusted friends, but holding themselves in readiness to move at a moment's warning. About the middle of July they were notified by Mr. Ketelaer to make ready, as the vessel would sail from Amsterdam in August. They started immediately by private convey-

ance, in different parties,* and proceeded, by the directions given, to a rendezvous in Antwerp, whence they were conveyed to Amsterdam; they there put up at the same hotel, and they were instructed to await at that place for further orders. P. J. Desmet, who had but lately joined the party, had borrowed from a friend of his family the money which he needed for the journey, and this friend had written to the young man's father, informing him that he had advanced money to his son for a trip to America. The father instantly dispatched an elder son in pursuit of the truant, who was speedily traced to his lodgings in Amsterdam. Young Desmet's brother did not believe him called to the priesthood, and imputed his action to the waywardness and love of novelty which are peculiar to youth, and accordingly he urged him to return home to his parents. When he perceived that his young brother was immovable in his purpose, and that further dissuasion was useless, he yielded, and furnished him with all the requisite means, recommending him, however, to write home for money when his mind was changed, and he wished to return to Belgium.

It having become known to their friends in

*They met the King, William I., returning in his carriage from the Hague; they saluted him, even bidding him good-bye; but, fortunately, the full import of this innocent boldness was not understood by him. William I. was King of the Netherlands, and, consequently, Belgium was subject to the government of Holland at that time.

Antwerp that their movements were no longer secret, it was feared, by those colleagues beyond the borders of Holland, that steps might be taken by the civil authorities to have the whole band arrested and countermarched back to Belgium. In order to avert this disastrous issue to all that had been hitherto accomplished, the young men were placed aboard a schooner and hurried away to the Texal, a small island which is situated a few miles off the coast of North Holland. On this island dwelt the families of numerous pilots who steered ocean vessels into the harbor of Amsterdam, and back again into the open sea at their departure from port. This maneuver of the party was effected clandestinely, and was known only to a few reliable friends whose assistance was needed to shield them from danger. They were detained on the Texal about two weeks before the American vessel, the "Columbus," was ready to stand out to sea. All arrangements had been made by Mr. Ketelaer and other friends for receiving on board at the island the whole band, in such a manner as to elude the authorities.

Father Nerinckx had also come upon the island, accompanied by Charles Gilbert,* from London, and Jacobus Vanrysselberghe, a Bel-

*Mr. Gilbert was a convert to the church. He was an Englishman, born in London. He was a carpenter by trade, and remained with the Loretto Sisters till his death, about Easter, 1867. He died at Mt. St. Benedict, in Louisville, Ky.

gian, who intended to become lay brothers at Loretto, Kentucky, but his arrival was, for some days, unknown to the young men. When they became aware of his presence, Mr. Verhaegen sought him out, and politely called upon him. This exhibition of his respect procured both for himself and companions a severe reprimand for their imprudence in wandering publicly about the island, and talking boisterously, quite heedless of their perilous condition. But to avoid inopportune cheerfulness, or to be thoughtful about the possible evils of noise and loquacity when danger is reported to be imminent, is not an ordinary employment of youthful faculties; and hence it is not to be wondered at that they had explored the whole island before the end of the first day, and that one of their recreations was to drill as soldiers upon the lawns, in order to be better fitted for their doom, in case they were discovered and pressed into the service, by the government authorities, as recruits for the national army.

There were two churches on the island, and the young men publicly attended divine service in a body at each of them, their boldness causing no little annoyance to the saintly, but rigid Father Nerinckx.

Whilst returning to their boarding-house from the more distant of the two churches, on August 15th, they were informed, by a pilot who met them, that the ship for America was nearing the island, so that they should prepare quickly to go

on board. They hastened to get from their hotel all parcels, and went upon the pilot-boat to cross over the shoal water, beyond which the often mentioned ship for America rode at anchor. When they entered the pilot-boat, they soon ascertained that Father Nerinckx had already boarded it, and was concealed at the end of the vessel. After the boat was loosed from its moorings and was hurrying out over the breakers, Father Nerinckx stepped forth from his hiding-place, to reconnoiter the situation, and he again reproved his young companions sharply for their incautious behavior whilst on the island, which, he assured them, had exposed both him and them to the risk of government interference with their departure from the country.

It will be noticed in what is thus far narrated, that Father Nerinckx, from the beginning, was careful not to commit himself by any explicit engagements or promises, which, if known to the civil authorities, could in any wise compromise him. The opposition of the government to young men's emigrating from Belgium was aimed, as will be readily inferred, to prevent the evasion of military duty at home. So secret and circumspect had the venerable missionary been, that though Mr. Van Assche had learned from him the name of the vessel on which he would return to America, the time when it would sail, and was put in communication with Ketelaer, Father Nerinckx' agent, yet not one of the young men had ever even seen him, except

Messrs. Van Assche and Verhaegen, till they listened to his austere, yet prudent and fatherly monitions on the pilot-boat. They got safe aboard the Columbus, and were speedily out upon the high sea. As their vessel floated onward, they seemed to have cast no "lingering, longing looks" back upon the shores which most of them were never to see again. It was too magnanimous a sacrifice of home, and native land, and loved ones whom they were leaving behind, to be expressed by the tears of sensible affection.

All escaped sea-sickness, except Messrs. Elet and Desmet, who suffered much, especially whilst in the English Channel. In their distress, courage failed them, and they several times petitioned the captain to put them ashore, if such a thing were possible; but the hardy seaman merely laughed at them. Their ailment ceased in a few days, and the rest of the voyage was without any unusual occurrence. Father Nerinckx spent the day according to exact rule: He arose each morning at the same hour, and then, in a devout posture on his chair near his bed, with downcast eyes and body motionless, he was, for two or three hours, absorbed in prayer. About sunset every evening, he would stand on the prow of the vessel for a considerable time in prayer. He was kind and fatherly to his youthful companions for the American missions, but exacted of them regularity in spiritual exercises, and he strived, with moderate success, to enforce

the gravity of deportment and demureness of manners, which were so marked in himself.

Father Nerinckx rarely smiled, though his countenance was benignant. He sometimes talked in the English language with the captain, who showed him special attention and kindness. His conversation with the young men was almost exclusively on spiritual subjects, but was not protracted beyond a few minutes at a time. Yet his equanimity and self-possession yielded on one occasion to human impulses: Rev. Mr. Veulman was reciting his office in the cabin, when the captain of the vessel and a Jew began to inspect a pistol near by him. The young clergyman took the fancy that their talk in English was about him, and that they were preparing to shoot him; being seized with sudden terror, he ran quite frantic up to that part of the deck where Father Nerinckx was, and was followed by the captain, whose countenance showed him to be much amused. When the cause of the occurrence and his rapid movements were explained to Father Nerinckx, their ludicrous character, with the frightened looks and the trepidation of the young man, completely conquered the severe gravity of the holy old priest, and he laughed convulsively, to the surprise even of the sailors. Several times afterward, when asked, in the presence of the young men, by inquiring friends for some favorable testimony to their good behavior on sea, it afforded him an opportunity for

a little innocent pleasantry, quite characteristic of his simplicity and good nature, and he would answer: "I know nothing of them, except that Mr. Veulman can run very fast." Thus the agile Mr. Veulman's swift-footed exploit was never forgotten by his companions, even when afterward weighed down with the burden of more than three score and ten years.

After a pleasant voyage of just thirty-nine days, they landed at Philadelphia, on Sunday afternoon, September 23, 1821. The wharf was crowded with people, white and black, the latter complexion affording a striking novelty for the curiosity of the ingenuous young travelers. A number of gentlemen came on board, making various inquiries concerning the passage over the sea, the captain, his treatment of the passengers, about Belgium, etc. Father Nerinckx and the two candidates for Loretto landed and remained for a time in Philadelphia. The young Belgians lodged during Sunday night on the ship, and on the following morning they were transferred to a steamboat for Baltimore, reaching that place on the same day.

The archiepiscopal See of Baltimore was then filled by Archbishop Marechal. He invited the young men to remain with him, and go to the Seminary; but they were not to be diverted from their purpose, which, from the beginning, was to join Mr. Vandevelde at the Georgetown College. Of the crowd, however, Rev. Mr. Veulman remained in Baltimore; also Mr. Van

Horsick, who, though he desired to go to Georgetown, yet, from the fact that he owed a sum of money to his brother, was ineligible to the society, and was compelled to remain in Baltimore. The remaining seven, namely, Messrs. Van Assche, Verhaegen, Elet, Smedts, De Smet, Verreydt, and De Maillet, proceeded by carriages on to Georgetown College. The Provincial of the Maryland province at that time was Father Anthony Kohlman; the master of novices at White Marsh* was Father Charles Van Quickenborne, a native of Ghent, in Belgium. After some opportune repose and recreation, the postulants were sent to the novitiate at White Marsh; they began their regular probation on the 6th of October, 1821. Father Nerinckx visited them at White Marsh before continuing his journey to Kentucky. His advice to them while on the sea, had been to prefer becoming members of the Society of Jesus, and his impressive words helped to confirm them in their resolution of going to Georgetown. It was not a small gratification for the saintly old missionary now to see those noble youths actually clad in the garb of Jesuit novices. They loved him for his holiness and his unfeigned charity. And Father Nerinckx was a man of God, who left some impress of his deep

* The place was so named in commemoration of the illustrious Father White, S. J., who accompanied the first colony of English Catholics, who, leaving their country for conscience's sake, settled in Maryland, in 1634.

sanctity on all, even those with whom he was only transiently connected.

Father Nerinckx sang High Mass of thanksgiving in the Cathedral of Baltimore, a day of thanksgiving having been appointed at that time by the municipal authorities. Bishop England speaks of the pleasure it afforded him to hear that Mass, and to preach on the occasion. He says: "The good Doctor Tessier, the venerable Superior of St. Sulpice, in the Seminary in that city, was kind enough to introduce the celebrant and the preacher to each other, and to bring both to partake of his and Rev. Doctor Damphoux' hospitality. That day shall not be blotted from the Bishop's memory; nor shall his good friend, Mr. Nerinckx, be forgotten by him at the altar."*

*"Catholic Miscellany," December 8, 1824.

CHAPTER XXVII.

1821–1877.

THE SOCIETY OF JESUS.—ESTABLISHMENT OF THE WESTERN MISSIONS.—THE MISSOURI MISSION ORGANIZED.—NOVITIATE AT FLORISSANT.—INDIAN MISSIONS.—THE POTTAWATOMIES OF MICHIGAN.—FATHER DESMET AND COMPANIONS.—VARIOUS ESTABLISHMENTS OF THE MISSOURI PROVINCE.

IF the Jesuit province of Missouri has grown to be numerous and influential, and is doing much to maintain and extend genuine religion in the West, surely some share of the glory of this work is due to Father Nerinckx, under whose fatherly protection its founders all came to America. His impressive advice to them was to persevere in the purpose for which they left their native land, and devote themselves to the Indian missions, if the chance to do so should offer; nor were these solemn words of the saintly missionary ever forgotten by them.

Our readers will naturally be pleased to learn how that undertaking, in which Father Nerinckx encouraged them to engage, finally succeeded, and we devote the present chapter to the glorious work, which none in the United States ignore, but which, if we are not misin-

formed, none had as yet the honor to recount in print.

Two years after the arrival of Father Nerinckx and companions at Baltimore, Bishop Dubourg, of Louisiana, went to Georgetown to request, from the Provincial of the Maryland province, a colony of Jesuits for the evangelization of the Indians in the State of Missouri. Father Van Quickenborne and Father Timmermans, with Messrs. Van Assche, Desmet, Verhaegen, Verreydt, Smedts, Elet, and brothers Peter De Meyer and Henry Rysselmans, offered themselves for the missions in the Far West. They left White Marsh about the middle of April, 1823; went to Baltimore, where they procured wagons for their luggage, and started on their journey to Wheeling, West Virginia. They went by way of Frederick, Maryland; Conewago, Pennsylvania, and Cumberland, Maryland; thence across the Alleghany Mountains, reaching Wheeling after a journey of about two weeks. They were here entertained for a few days by Mr. Thompson, the kind gentleman whom Father Nerinckx visited in 1820, and whose daughter subsequently became a distinguished member of the Sacred Heart congregation.

Our travelers here procured two flat-boats, which they lashed together, placing upon one of them a wagon, some negroes who accompanied them, their stock of provisions for the journey, etc.; the reverend gentlemen, with their library

and various articles of church furniture, being in the other. After a trip down the river of some twelve days, without striking incidents, they reached Louisville, where they met Rev. Father Nerinckx; a "Falls pilot" was engaged to get their boats safely over the falls, and, in this trip down the rapids, Rev. Van Assche accompanied him. They went down the Ohio to Shawneetown, where they disembarked, and sending their baggage around to St. Louis by steamboat, they journeyed across the land to the same destination.

They reached St. Louis, May 30, 1823, and on the evening of the same day, Father Van Quickenborne rode on horseback out to Florissant, accompanied by Father De La Croix. The present novitiate farm, or at least that part of it on which the houses stand, had been donated by Bishop Dubourg to the Jesuits. They took possession of the place, and began at once to clear land around the dwelling in order to make a garden. On July 31st, they began to dig the cellar for a dwelling, which, in the style of that day, was a log cabin. Father De La Croix made over his church at Florissant to Father Van Quickenborne immediately after the new-comers were settled at the novitiate of St. Stanislaus.

The aim of Father Van Quickenborne and his companions in first coming to the far West, was the devoting of themselves to the Indian missions, and this was a ruling thought in their minds for several years. Father Desmet, who

afterward became so illustrious for what he accomplished among the aborigines of the Rocky Mountains and on the Pacific Slope, manifested, from his first arrival in Missouri, a deep interest in all things pertaining to this singular race. Shortly after the party settled at Florissant, he excavated Indian mounds on the summit of the Charbonniere, a bluff, three hundred feet high, overlooking the Missouri river at a mile's distance from the novitiate, and so called because it rests on a bed of stone coal. He exhumed therefrom an Indian skeleton, which he kept for a time in his room. One year after reaching Florissant, Father Van Quickenborne erected a large frame house, two and a half stories high, in order to open a school for Indian boys, the government of the United States agreeing to allow some compensation for each pupil. They began the school with fourteen Indian boys, mostly of the Cherokee tribe, a band of which was then still lingering on the prairies beyond the Missouri river; and a little later, some white families from St. Louis sent their sons to be educated at St. Stanislaus' novitiate.

It was soon discovered by the little missionary colony that Missouri was a field in which much could be done for the religious welfare of the white population, then pouring into its fertile plains and growing towns, from the more eastern States. Accordingly, when the young men were ordained priests, in 1827, they took full charge of the congregations in St. Charles county, in

addition to Florissant, Fathers Felix Verreydt and J. B. Smedts residing in the town of St. Charles; besides, they went on missionary excursions into Illinois, the interior counties of Missouri, and also occasionally visiting the Indian tribes beyond the western boundary of the State. This Jesuit mission in Missouri was subject to the Provincial of Maryland till the year 1831, from which time it was governed by its own superior. The first two novices received were both natives of Kentucky, namely, James Yates and George Miles. They entered the novitiate at Florissant in 1827. From the year 1831, the number of members increased rapidly, as did also the extent and wants of the mission. It was made a vice-province in December, 1839; and it was raised to the rank of a province in 1864.

Before Bishop Dubourg left Missouri, resigning his title as Bishop of Upper and Lower Louisiana, he made over to Father Van Quickenborne a small piece of land near the town limits of St. Louis, which had been given by Jeremiah Connor, toward founding a college. Father Van Quickenborne purchased some adjacent property, and, in 1828, he began the erection of a college building, just at the edge of the town, and fronting on the St. Charles road. The St. Louis College began its first session on November 2, 1829; and, in February, 1833, it was incorporated by a special act of the State legislature, under the name of "The St. Louis University,"

having Rev. P. J. Verhaegen as its first president. From 1829 to the present time, the institution has been uniformly prosperous, proving to be, on the whole, the most successful and influential of our catholic colleges in the Western States.

In 1836, Father Van Quickenborne established a residence among the Kickapoo Indians, at a point on the Missouri river eight miles above the site on which now stands Leavenworth City, intending there to found a permanent church, with schools for this tribe. But, in 1838, the fierce Kickapoos, excited by the lies and the wild eloquence of a young chieftain who published himself among them as a prophet, deserted the mission, wandering along the western border of Missouri, where they subsequently became notorious as drunkards and horse-thieves.

In 1838, Father Verreydt and Father Desmet began a missionary chapel and residence at Council Bluffs, around which collected a portion of the wild Pottawatomies, distinguished by the name "prairie Indians," from the civilized tribe then about to be removed from Michigan. Some roving bands belonging to other tribes also gathered around the fathers at this place; but when the wild Pottawatomies went off to rejoin their tribe, in 1841, the mission at Council Bluffs was given up. It was then that Father Desmet began his celebrated missionary journeys through the Rocky Mountains, where he

and his zealous companions accomplished so much good for the savage tribes that roamed through that region. For a history of these missions in the Rocky Mountains the reader is referred to the published writings of Father Desmet, and to the forthcoming biography of this famous Indian missionary.

Early in the present century, the Pottawatomie tribe of Indians dwelt mainly in the territory between Lake Michigan and Lake Huron, where they had above fifty villages, some of them situated as far south as the St. Joseph's river and northern Indiana. The wigwam of the great chief, Pokegan, whose descendants still remain in Michigan, was often visited by Father Richard, from Detroit, and Father Badin, from Kentucky, who went to dwell among these Indians in 1822. Father Deseilles, after giving all his patrimony to this mission, came over from Belgium in 1833 to spend his remaining life with these Indians in the wilds of Michigan. At the death of this worthy missionary, his place was taken by Father Petit, a secular priest from the diocese of Vincennes, Indiana. In 1837, Michigan was admitted into the Union as a State, and the government of the United States then determined to move this tribe of Indians to territorial domains under the jurisdiction of the general government. The place selected for them was a fertile district through which comes Sugar Creek, a head branch of Osage river, and just beyond the western border of Missouri.

The tribe, accompanied by Father Petit, reached their new home in the Summer of 1838. The hardships and privations of such a life soon prostrated Father Petit; he started home to Vincennes for relief, and got as far as the St. Louis University, where he died, in January, 1839. He requested the Jesuit Fathers to take charge of his mission, and they consented to do so. Father Christian Hoecken, with several companions, went immediately to Sugar Creek. Church and schools were erected, the government furnishing money for the purpose, agreeably to a promise made to the Indians before their departure from Michigan. In July, 1841, four ladies of the Sacred Heart Society, with Madame Lucilla Mathevon as Superior, reached the mission and took charge of the school for girls. The tribe was again moved in 1847, and this time their destination was a district just west of the place where now stands Topeka, the capital of Kansas, and on the Kansas or Kaw river. By mistake, they stopped on the lands of the Shawnees, and did not reach the site of the present St. Mary's Mission till the evening of September 9, 1848. Owing principally, under God, to the persevering zeal and ability of Father Mauritius Gaitland, who spent twenty-nine years of his life among the Pottawatomies, three-fourths of the tribe became christians. After they sold their lands, and the Kansas Pacific Railroad was built through their reservation, in 1866, these Indians began to disperse, some going to

the Canadian river toward the mountains, some to the Indian Territory, some to Wisconsin, some remaining on a section of their Kansas reservation; so that this interesting tribe is now rapidly losing even its autonomy, and its beautiful language is also passing away.* At St. Mary's Mission there are now two flourishing institutions—St. Mary's College and the Sacred Heart Academy, which were chartered under the laws of Kansas, in December, 1869.

In 1847, Father Schoenmakers and Father Bax, with three lay brothers, went to take charge of the Osage Indians at their reservation on the banks of the Neosho river in southeastern Kansas.† Church and schools were erected, the girl children being committed to the care of Loretto Sisters, as narrated in another chapter of this volume. In 1869 and 1870, the Osage tribe were removed to the Indian Territory. About that time, white settlers commenced to pour into this portion of Kansas in great numbers; among whom were many catholics from Kentucky and the Eastern States. Fathers Philip Colleton and Paul Ponziglione made frequent excursions for more than a hundred miles distance, and in all directions, hunting up the scattered catholic settlers, and, when

* Father Gaitland wrote an elaborate dictionary and grammar of this Indian dialect, in which he became an adept.

† Father Van Quickenborne visited this place as early as 1829; but no permanent residence was there established before the year 1847.

possible, causing them to collect in the same neighborhoods. They built many churches, and formed a number of congregations which now have resident priests; as was also done by Father Du Mortier in the region around St. Mary's Mission.

Both at St. Mary's Mission and the Osage Mission the general government paid seventy-five dollars annually for each pupil in the schools. By means of this allowance in money, together with what could be raised on the land, the missions were well sustained; they were protected by the military, the gentlemanly officers frequently encouraging them by kind visits; and all was harmonious till the advent of white settlers, and the inauguration of the "Quaker policy," brought about a new state of things. At both places the institutions in charge of the fathers and those of the sisters were supported out of the common fund, as one family; but when the Indians departed from the missions, a division of their possessions was made in a manner that was mutually satisfactory. At both places there are now large churches with numerous white congregations, as well as flourishing institutions, male and female, for the education of white youths.

In 1838, the Jesuit fathers of Missouri took charge of St. Charles College, Grand Coteau, Louisiana, having been requested to do so by the Provincial of Lyons, in France, to whom that mission pertained. A full faculty of professors

was sent to that institution by Father Verhaegen, the Vice-Provincial of Missouri, and it was retained by them till 1848, when the fathers of New Orleans were able to take it off their hands. During that time the College of St. Charles was very flourishing, as it now continues to be.

In 1837, Father Helias began missionary excursions among the German settlers in the interior counties of Missouri. He founded Westphalia, in Osage county, and resided there several years; at a later date, other fathers were sent to his assistance. They established numerous stations and churches, some of which now have resident priests, while others are still attended by the fathers residing at Washington, in Franklin county, and those at Westphalia, in Osage county. Father Helias, a native of Ghent, in Belgium, spent nearly forty years in those missions, and died in Cole county, on August 11, 1874, aged seventy-eight years.

In 1840, the fathers from Missouri accepted the Athenæum, in Cincinnati, at the request of Archbishop Purcell; but they changed its name to the St. Xavier College, and Rev. J. B. Elet was its first president. As the college grounds were found to be too limited, and it being in the middle of the city, they discontinued it as a boarding-school in 1854. Since that time it has grown as a day school, till it has now become, both as to its course of studies and the number of its students, one of the leading colleges in

the West. There is attached to the college a parochial church, with a congregation of fifteen thousand souls, and numerously attended parish schools.

On April 14, 1845, Right Rev. Bishop Kenrick laid the corner-stone of St. Joseph's (German) church, at the corner of Tenth and Biddle streets, St. Louis—Father James Oliver Vandevelde then being Vice-Provincial. When the church and dwelling were completed, German fathers from the St. Louis University went to reside there, with Father Hofbauer as superior. The congregation now contains nearly ten thousand souls, and the parish schools are regularly attended by more than a thousand children.

In July, 1848, the Jesuit fathers of Missouri, at the instance of the venerable Bishop Flaget, took possession of St. Joseph's College, Bardstown, Kentucky—Father P. J. Verhaegen being the first president under its new government. A number of the faculty appointed to take control of the college left St. Louis on July 24th of that year. When they reached Louisville they went to pay their respects to the saintly old Bishop. On being introduced into his room, he rose from his chair, and, tottering under the burden of more than four score of years, he affectionately embraced each one, saying: "The Jesuit fathers left my diocese for New York two years ago; and I have prayed much during those two years that I might live to see this day of their return to me;" then, with faltering

voice, and quite overcome with emotion, he began the canticle of Simeon: "*Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine, secundum verbum tuum in pace.*" The college had numerous students, most of whom were from the Southern States; and it enjoyed uninterrupted prosperity, till closed on account of the civil war, in the year 1861. Classes were never again organized in the college by the Jesuit fathers, and they abandoned the place altogether, in December, 1868, donating to the Bishop of the diocese all the real estate owned by them in Bardstown, and giving back the college itself free of debt. A college was commenced on Fourth street, Louisville, Ky., in the year 1849, by the Jesuit fathers from Missouri, but it was closed in 1857; yet it had always been attended by a large number of intelligent pupils.

In 1855, St. Gall's church, in Milwaukee, was begun by Father De Coen, S. J., the nephew of Rev. Charles Nerinckx. The fathers now have two churches in that city, with excellent schools attached to St. Gall's church.

In the year 1857, Father Damen erected a frame church on the open prairie immediately west of Chicago. The spot is now at the center of the city, and the Holy Family church has a congregation of not less than twenty-five thousand souls, with from four to six thousand children attending its schools annually. The church, and the magnificent building of the St. Ignatius College adjacent to it, constitute an establish-

ment that possesses imposing grandeur. The St. Ignatius College began its first session in September, 1869; it already has a full course of studies, with over two hundred pupils. From this institution a number of fathers go forth each year, under the general direction of Father Damen, to give missions in different portions of the United States, especially in the large cities and manufacturing towns. By means of these missions, annually many thousands are induced to begin a regular and orderly life, in accordance with the laws of God and the rules of His church.

On June 3, 1877, the fathers of the Missouri province took the old cathedral, in Detroit, Michigan, at the request of Bishop Borgess, who generously made a gift of the property; and they began a preparatory college at the same place in the following September—Father J. B. Miege, formerly Vicar Apostolic of Kansas, being the superior. Finally, arrangements are now nearly perfected for their beginning a college also in Omaha, Nebraska.

The foregoing brief historical summary of chief events will serve to convey some notion of the results which owe their origin to the little band that accompanied Father Nerinckx from Belgium to the United States, in 1821, the prime mover among them being Francis Judocus Van Assche, of St. Amand, that came to Missouri in 1823, in accordance with an invitation given them by Bishop Dubourg. Of those

who came to Missouri at that time, all have now passed away except Father Felix Verreydt, aged eighty, and Brother Peter De Meyer, who is in the eighty-sixth year of his age. The successors of the original little colony that began near the Missouri river, seventeen miles northwest of St. Louis, now number more than three hundred members, who are engaged in various works of religion throughout most of the Western and Northwestern States, and in nearly all the great cities of the West.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

1821–1824.

From Baltimore to Kentucky.—The Maryland postulants.—Sister Alexandrina Doran's wonderful vocation.—Mount Mary's.—Establishment of Bethania convent.—Election of a Dear Mother.—Establishment of Mount Carmel, Bethlehem, Perry county, Missouri, and Mount Olivet.—Holy Cross church.—Project of a Negro sisterhood.

Father Nerinckx remained about two weeks in Baltimore, and, in the meantime, seven young ladies presented themselves as candidates for the Loretto sisterhood. They had seen a picture of the sisters' humble dwelling and its surroundings, and they selected the Society of the Friends of Mary in preference to other congregations, on account of its poverty; to select souls, Lady Poverty has lost none of the attractions which made the seraphic St. Francis fall in love with her! Father Nerinckx received them kindly, and took great interest in their religious education; he handed them a copy of the rules to learn by heart, and gave them instructions twice a day for a whole week.* The young

* For the details about the postulants from Maryland, we are indebted to Sister Eulalia Kelly, one of their number, who still

ladies were: Misses Mary Madden, Catharine A. Kelly, Bridget S. Kelly, Petronella Doran, Alice Cloney, Margaret McSorly, and Mary McSorly. Miss Mary A. Carney had come over with Father Nerinckx from England. While making preparations in Baltimore for the journey to Kentucky, many sumptuous dinners were given to the company; one at the house of Mr. Owen McManus, and the last one by the saintly Father Moranville, pastor of St. Patrick's church.*

The eight new candidates set out for Loretto in a stage, on the 5th of November, 1821. Besides the young postulants, the party consisted of Father Nerinckx and the two young men who intended to join the new Brotherhood of Loretto. The moment the stage moved, Father Nerinckx made the sign of the cross, and said: "All say

zealously performs, at Loretto, Kentucky, the duties of a member of the community, which she took upon herself fifty-six years ago.

*"Father Nerinckx, Brother Charles, and Mr. Thos. Kelly were also guests at Father Moranville's. The last of many courses at table was a loaf of corn-bread, but such delicious corn-bread was never before eaten, with white grapes from France, and wines. When Father Nerinckx saw the corn-bread, he smiled. Father Moranville said: 'I have ordered the corn-bread in compliment to the young ladies who are going to Kentucky, to show them what kind of bread they will have to eat when they get there.' Another smile from Father Nerinckx, who replied: 'Yes; but the Friends of Mary at the Foot of the Cross, living in the wilds of Kentucky, eat their corn-bread without salt, and they leave in it the *good bran!*'" (Reminiscences of Sister E——.)

the beads, first; then read and pray; but you are not allowed to talk on the road." He was strictly obeyed, and from that time the young girls lived under conventual rules. The weather was very cold, the roads almost impassable, and our travelers reached Pittsburg after a tiresome and difficult journey of eight days, having walked all the way over the mountains. In Pittsburg, they were kindly received by the pastor, Father McGuire, and the catholics of that city, and they remained a week, whilst a flat-boat was being built to take them down the Ohio. The water being very high, they only reached Louisville on the 7th of December, but they had a very pleasant time on the river.

Having formed into a little community, they observed all the rules of the Mother-house, Loretto: rose up early in the morning, had prayers and meditation in common, kept silence, took their meals, and observed the recreation time, just like religious of long standing. Father Nerinckx frequently observed to them that their boat was a floating little paradise. He gave them instructions twice a day, and never tired preaching charity. On one occasion a young lady who joined the little community in Pittsburg, exclaimed, after an instruction: "Well! if my mother were at the door, I would not speak to her!" Another, who died later in the odor of sanctity, replied: "If my mother were here, I would fly to her, press her to my heart, and kiss her a thousand times!" The

latter, indeed, thoroughly understood the true love of God, who, in bidding us to leave father and mother, brothers and sisters, for His sake, does not command us to crush all affections of the heart, but elevates, purifies, hence intensifies them, because consecrated to Him. True piety and disdain of the world are not against nature, but above it; and the deluded child, who had uttered the intemperate speech, soon experienced how little she had of the true spirit of solid piety. Shortly after her arrival at Loretto she returned home, under the pretext that the Loretto rules were not sufficiently austere.

"When our loved pastor," writes Sister Eulalia in her Reminiscences, "Father Timothy O'Brien, of happy memory, wrote to us from Baltimore, that Father Nerinckx had arrived from Europe, was then in that city, and required us to join him on the 29th of October, he requested us to bring with us Miss Petronella Doran, who resided about twenty miles from our home. So, Mother Josephine * and her brother went to impart the glad tidings to the young lady, and bring her to our house, thinking, of course, her parents and sisters were in the secret of her pious intentions. But not so; they knew nothing about it. They were both surprised and angry to learn that their daughter had the intention of leaving them, and, after much debate, her mother, who was not a catholic, though she

*One of the young ladies, later Superior-General of the Society, called in religion Mother Josephine.

attended church, declared she should not go. They first scolded her, then coaxed her, cried over her, often pressing her to their bosom, and kissing her with all the affection of the fondest of parents; thus, they tried every means to shake her resolution and at the same time pacify her. She was seventeen years of age, was firm in her determination, and could not be overcome; but finally, being so often reminded of all they had done and suffered for her, she thought within herself: 'Yes; I would be ungrateful to leave my good parents thus; and yet my every thought is for Loretto, to join those dear, good sisters. But I can not, I must not go.' Mother Josephine and her brother returned home the next day, while the Doran family sat scolding and caressing by turns, which they continued till eleven o'clock at night, when all retired to rest.

"But our Petronella went to prayer almost heart-broken.* She had not been long on her knees, when the room was filled with a bright light—to use her own words, 'a light ten thousand times brighter than the sun,'—and she saw

* I trust that the following narrative will not detract from the veracity of the work. In these days of skepticism, it has become the fashion to disbelieve the supernatural; but "God is wonderful in his Saints," and all Saints are not canonized. The whole life of Sister Alexandrina impressed the sister who communicates this occurrence to us, with the truth of what she told her to have happened, and her humility seemed to preclude all hallucination. Father Nerinckx was no enthusiast, and, after due investigation and careful examination into all the circumstances, he believed the vision to have actually taken place.

three beautiful ladies coming up to her. The middle one was clad with all the brilliancy of heaven. She gazed on the prostrate and now penitent lady; then, in a chiding, bitter tone, said: 'Yes, you think your mother has done so much for you that you can not leave her! Look at my Son; see what *He* has done and suffered for you!' She looked in the direction designated by the finger of the speaker (the Blessed Virgin, of course), and, oh the sight! It chills me to write it: Our Lord on the cross, in his bitter agony, his eyes suffused with blood, and looking intently on her, while writhing with pain! Petronella fell prostrate and senseless. She knew not how long she remained thus; but when she recovered all was dark, and she was alone. She rose up, took one dress, wrapped it in a handkerchief, put on her bonnet, went to the room of her parents, and having gained the door, she said in a loud voice: 'I am gone; good-bye!' Her parents were not asleep, but they attached no importance to her words. Taking the road to the church, Petronella walked twenty miles alone through the dark night, reaching the church just at daybreak. She then inquired the way to our house, where she arrived at sunrise, and related her story, at which we all wondered. My mother supplied her with all needful clothing; and my father took her to Baltimore with Mother Josephine and myself, and related to Father Nerinckx her whole history: how she left home for

the sake of going to Loretto, and of her traveling to Baltimore under his special protection. Father Nerinckx was delighted with the narrative, every word of which he believed, after having carefully examined Petronella on the subject. He then took special charge of her, considering her as fruit already ripe for heaven, a soul in whose beauty the Celestial King was greatly delighted.

"While Petronella was at our house, one of the children came in, and said Mr. N. Cane was at the front gate. This gentleman was her uncle, and came on some business with my father. Thinking that he was in search of her, she slipped out at the back door, went to an outhouse and concealed herself in some dry flax; nor was she found till after four o'clock, having been in her hiding-place over five hours and without her dinner. To the little ones who found her, her first words were: 'Is Mr. Cane gone? What did he want? Did he ask for me?' Being now satisfied that he was not in search of her, she went into the house and made her apology for all the anxiety she had caused the family by her absence. The Lord did not permit her parents to look after her for more than six weeks, when she was safe at Loretto. When they understood she was really gone, they grieved much for a time, but became reconciled.

"When asked if she was not afraid while walking alone in the night, she answered she

was not, for she felt that the Lord had called her, that she was doing His holy will, and that He would protect her. Her father was an honorable man, a farmer of pretty fair means; and the family were noted for their piety, though they knew nothing of a conventual life, nor of what Almighty God could work in the heart of His chosen ones, and of what He had actually wrought in the soul of their cherished Petronella. Every Sunday, half the family were at church; the girls always came fasting, went to confession, to holy communion at the late Mass, and after service, (generally one o'clock,) they mounted their horses, and rode home for their breakfast, seventeen miles.

"But to return to our postulant. She got along very well. On the feast of the Ascension, 1822, she received with great fervor the religious dress, which, until that time, she had considered herself unworthy of wearing, although every one looked upon her as a saint. She received the name of Sister *Alexandrina*, and, at the end of one year, she made her vows with the greatest joy. On the 18th of March, 1824, she gave up her pure soul to God. During her sickness, her sufferings were violent; yet she made no complaint, but looked up to her suffering Jesus on the Cross, happy in the thought that all her trials would soon be at an end, and the dear, loving Jesus would receive her into His arms. Finding that her end was approaching, she asked for the last Sacraments. They were

administered by Father Nerinckx, who did not leave her until he had received her last sigh and closed her eyes.

"Her life, with her parents, had been spent in innocence, industry, and virtue; in the convent, in labor, prayer, fasting, and all sorts of mortifications, for which she anxiously sought. She had never been known to violate the rule of silence, was never absent from any exercise of the community, was always pleasant with every one, and, in recreation, was the gayest of the gay. Nor was she unmindful of her loving parents. She often spoke of them with deep affection, and said she grieved for them the more, because they grieved so much for her. It was she who said on the boat: 'If my mother were at the door, I would fly to her, and kiss her a thousand times.' Virtue is not incompatible with filial affection; she dearly loved her parents, but she loved her God still more. Sister Alexandrina was a native of Hartford county, Maryland, and belonged to the church of St. Ignatius, near Bellair."

As we stated above, the missionary party arrived in Louisville, December 7, 1821. "At that early date, carriages were unknown in the now metropolitan city of Louisville. A large market-wagon was procured, and the young ladies, mounting on their trunks, and accompanied by Brother Charles Gilbert on horseback, started for Loretto by Bardstown, which they reached on Sunday, 9th of December. The

good Bishop David and the Sisters of Charity received them very graciously, and many inducements were held out to them to change their vocation and determination of becoming Lorettines, and to join the Sisters of Nazareth. But they felt that God had called them to Loretto, and there they went, regardless of typhoid fever and other diseases prevailing in the community at that time. They spent the Sunday in Bardstown. On Monday, 10th of December, after having heard Mass, and while the stars yet glimmered in the sky, they were again in the wagon on the road to their dear Loretto, which they reached at eight o'clock P. M. They were cordially welcomed by the sisters, and at once admitted into the community. They all persevered, and are now, we hope, in heaven. I said all; yet one of their number still lingers on earth, but her time, too, will soon come.

"Dear Father Nerinckx, who, with Mr. James Van Rysselberghe, had remained one day longer in Louisville to arrange with wagoners and see his baggage safely started to Loretto, arrived the next day, in company with the saintly Bishop Flaget, and there was great joy at Loretto. The bells were rung in their sweetest, yet loudest tones; the sisters, the pupils—even the servants—went in procession to meet them, and these aged fathers mingled their tears of joy with those of the sisters; there was not a dry eye. The Bishop led the way to the church, and preached; after which, Father Ner-

inckx gave the Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament. Need we say that the sisters profited by the recreation granted, to surround their father, and bid him welcome with all the gratitude of children who have found their long-lost father?"

The first care of Father Nerinckx was to realize the project of the institution of a brotherhood, similar in purpose to that of the Society of the Friends of Mary, for the education of boys. We have already seen how he was thwarted in his plans by the Rev. Wm. Byrne taking possession of Mount Mary's. Father Nerinckx vainly objected that, under the present management of affairs, not only the stability of the institution itself was imperiled, but the possible establishment of many similar ones would be precluded, because no provision was made for obtaining or training teachers, whilst the numbers of the clergy were totally inadequate, and would be so for many years to come. The Bishop had approved of the institution, and Father Byrne was determined to remain. Bishop Flaget would likely have been very willing to turn over the school to the hard-working priest, who had conceived the first idea of its feasibility and had acquired the grounds for that very purpose; but he thought he could not eject the Rev. Byrne from the college which he had established. And so were the cherished plans of the Rev. Father Nerinckx defeated, and he submitted without grumbling. It was a great

loss for the church in Kentucky, but the missionary had done what he could; he worked not for his own renown, but for the glory of God; and, having no other resources to rely on, unwilling, moreover, to start what might be looked upon as an opposition establishment, he relinquished his project, and was so forced to refuse the many young men who had already applied for admission into the projected brotherhood. Far from showing any ill-will to the college thus founded, Father Nerinckx, with true christian self-denial, did all in his power to insure its success, and even sent to Mount Mary's a little colony of Loretto sisters to do the work which, for want of means, Father Byrne could not intrust to hired help.

Father Nerinckx now turned all his energies to increase the usefulness of his own institution of sisters. Measures were immediately taken to establish a house near Fairfield, Nelson county,* Kentucky, and on the 21st of December of the same year (1821), Mother Bibiana Elder was sent there as Superior, with ten sisters. This institution received the name of *Bethania*, and the care thereof devolved on Father Chabrat, who, on his return from Europe, had been appointed to take care of the congregations surrounding Bardstown.

The establishment of Bethania, Spencer county, ceased to exist on the 6th of April, 1828,

*The convent, however, was situated in what is now Spencer county.

it being Easter Monday; and the sisters arrived at Loretto in the evening of the same day, and were affectionately received by the superiors and sisters. That community had been sorely afflicted; for, after a short existence of six years and a half, the remains of eleven of its members were left reposing under the shadow of the large cross which adorned its cemetery. Some time after, Mother Josephine Kelly, local superior of Gethsemani, was deputized to preside at the removal of the remains of the sisters who died at Bethania, to the Loretto graveyard. Numbers of people collected to witness the solemn scene, and Father James Elliot, parish priest of Fairfield, taking into his hands the fleshless skull of Sister Everildis, whom all had known as a beautiful and accomplished young lady who had forsaken the world and soon after died, among them, the death of the elect, pathetically addressed his audience, reminding them of the certainty of death and the necessity of working for the salvation of their souls.

But above all things Father Nerinckx applied himself diligently to his sisterhood's spiritual training, about which he was far more anxious than about the increase of its institutions. He well knew that applications for colonies of his sisters would never be wanting, provided they were virtuous and faithful to their vocation; and convinced, moreover, that his pilgrimage on earth would soon be at an end, he applied himself, during the year 1822, with possibly more

fervor than heretofore, to imbue them thoroughly with the spirit of penance and mortification, which was the groundwork of the whole fabric. To this end, he jotted down a few notes for the guidance of the sisters, and gave them oral instructions as often as his missionary duties, which did not require his being away as much as in former years, would allow.

Among the signs of vocation to his institute, he puts down as the first and most important: "An uncommon love for Jesus suffering and Mary sorrowing." That devotion is the touchstone of a religious call to his sisterhood; it pervades all his own labors, and is constantly recalled to the sisters. "Friday in Passion-week," he says, "is the great festival in the Society of the Friends of Mary. On this day we commemorate the sorrows of our Blessed Lady, caused by the sufferings and death of her Divine Son, our Redeemer. As you are titled *Friends of Mary at the Foot of the Cross*, you have just cause to claim as your own festive day, that, on which is piously commemorated the grief and sorrow of your Sacred Sorrowful Mother. The Passion of our Lord might be read, in Holy Week, soon after dinner on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday."* Of this, and other subjects which occupied his vigilant care during the year 1822, when he, so to speak, perfected and put the last finish to his institution, we will speak in

* Oral instructions of Father Nerinckx, taken down by Sister Louisa.

the chapter devoted to an appreciation of his spirit.

The rule regulating the election of a Superior-General, provided that a new election should take place every three years. Pursuant to that rule, "the first regular election took place about the Feast of the Purification of our Lady, and the installation on the 25th of March, 1822. The Dear Mother was Sister *Juliana Wathen.* The Mother Superior of Loretto, Sister Ann Hevern. The Mother Superior of Calvary, Sister Reyneldis Hayden. The Mother Superior of Gethsemani, Sister Isabella Clarke. The Mother Superior of Bethania, Sister Bibiana Elder. The Mother Superior of Jericho (in Mechlin, Belgium), Miss Mary Neeffs." *

In the Spring of 1823, Father Nerinckx began the building of a new brick church at Holy Cross, which was to be his crowning work on the Kentucky mission. The log chapel, the first church ever built in Kentucky, by the Rev. Mr. De Rohan in 1790, was in a dilapidated condition, and the catholics had sufficiently increased in numbers and wealth to warrant the undertaking. Father Nerinckx called upon his congregation to organize a *bee* for the cutting of the necessary timber, and an eye-witness relates that, notwithstanding his sixty-two years, he

* Father Nerinckx' journal. This Belgian House had most likely been aggregated to Loretto during Rev. Nerinckx' stay in Belgium, and it consisted of a kind of tertiaries, maidens who lived in the world and observed the Loretto rules as far as practicable in that state. Miss Mary Neeffs (? De Neff) was the daughter of Mr. De Neff, spoken of in chapter XXVI.

was as ready as ever to give them a helping hand. When the timber was squared, the farmers assembled with their teams to haul it to the church. One of them, Jim Newton, rather prided himself in his good team, and undertook to start a load which threatened to prove too much for the strength of his animals. The priest, noticing that the lower portion of a fallen tree with roots sticking up (called a *root-ward*, in Kentucky,) seemed in the road of the team, bade two men to lift it out of the way. "Too heavy," was the prompt reply. The courageous priest, whose strength of body, though much impaired, was still equal to his zeal, insisted upon their trying it, but they had to give it up as a bad job. Father Nerinckx rallied them, good-naturedly, upon the lack of strength of the young generation, and quietly walking up to where the root-ward was lying, he braced himself behind it, took it up in his arms, and threw it forward over the fence; then told Jim to go on with his load. The latter vigorously applied the whip to his spirited horses, but to no avail; they could not start it, and Jim threw anxious side-glances at Father Nerinckx. Finally, turning around, he requested him to retire, saying that, unless he went out of sight, the horses would not pull. The priest was puzzled, and asked what prevented the horses pulling in his presence, but he could elicit no further explanation out of the shrewd Kentuckians, who knew well how severe he was on a certain failing com-

mon to teamsters; and the priest had to yield and withdraw. As soon as Jim saw him disappear in the forest, and had allowed sufficient time for him to be out of hearing, he cracked his whip over the horses' heads, and launched at them a rather high-sounding expletive, which started them as if by magic. However, Father Nerinckx overheard the curse which the men had tried to drown with shouts, and he gave the abashed woodsman such a sound rebuke, that, forty years later, Jim had not yet forgotten it.

Father Nerinckx continued to superintend the work during the whole of that Summer, and passed much of his time at Holy Cross. On the 9th of June, 1823, he wrote to his brother and sister, in London: "I am, thanks to God, middling well in health, as I hope you are, and as busy as ever if not more so, without any charge of any particular congregation. I wrote to you some particulars that have taken place since my last return from Europe; just now, I am back from a trip I made to Vincennes, one hundred and eighty miles from this place, where I installed a young French priest as pastor of that place and of the neighborhood. On that occasion, a demand was made for a colony of our sisters for a school. I was requested to build the church of Holy Cross in that congregation; it is now under roof. It will be middling large and neat when finished, but a hard struggle to bring it to that." In a letter to Mother Bibiana of Bethania, dated Loretto, December 22, 1823,

he says: "I am but seldom at Loretto; Holy Cross keeps me constantly busy, and has done so nearly four months; I hope it will be finished before long. I want some church utensils for that chapel; but, what is worse, the tidings from Europe seem to put an end to our expectations from that country—my only source of help; so that patience will have to do the main business."

These troubles were, however, compensated in part by the happy tidings from Missouri, where the sisters had been sent the previous Spring, and where they were liked so well that in the same letter Father Nerinckx adds: "The town of St. Louis, Missouri, asks the Loretto nuns for the service of their hospital and orphanage; the society can not refuse these works of charity, but it may be proper to make those that offer themselves sensible of the kind of duty they may have to comply with. The Barrens at the Iron Works call for sisters; Holy Cross chapel wants some also."

In the meantime, God had blessed the work of his faithful servant, and vocations to the sisterhood multiplied rapidly; indeed Father Nerinckx stood in need of them all, for applications for sisters came from every quarter. After mentioning the three houses, of which we will now give a short account, in a letter to his brother,* Father Nerinckx adds: "Four more,

* MS. letter of June 9, 1823.

at least, are requested; our number grows small, weak, and too young; we have still in all the houses, and particularly at Loretto, a great number of individuals to feed and to clothe, and at Loretto barely one that pays for schooling, which amounts to fifty dollars a year; we feel a great scarcity of corn, the price is six times what it used to be."

In February, 1823, a new colony of six sisters, under the superiorship of Mother Agnes Hart, had been sent to Breckinridge county, Ky., where they established a new house, near Hardinsburgh, called *Mount-Carmel.** After a few years this establishment was removed to Hardin county, near Elizabethtown; and from the fact that the removal was made toward Christmas time, the sisters called their new home *Bethlehem*; they permanently settled there January 1, 1831.

During that same Winter of 1823, Bishop Dubourg, who had conceived a great idea of Father Nerinckx' virtue when he met him first in St. Thomas' Seminary, in 1817, wrote to him requesting a colony of sisters for his diocese of St. Louis. Early in the Spring, that Prelate went to Georgetown College to ask missionaries for the Indian tribes of Missouri, and invited Father Nerinckx to meet him in Louisville, on

* "A heavy share of the expenses of the colony sent to Rev. Mr. Abel, fell again on poor me; it started from here on Ash Wednesday last. This new house is called *Mount-Carmel.*" MS. letter of Rev. Nerinckx, June, 1823.

his return. It was on his way to that city that the following incident occurred. Its truth is vouched for by Sister Eulalia Kelly, in whose presence the priest himself told it at Calvary Convent, when visiting that community to designate those who had to go to Missouri. Arriving at Salt river, between Bardstown and Louisville, Father Nerinckx found the stream very much swollen in consequence of the heavy rains which attended the mild Spring weather of 1823. He, however, determined to ford it. Mid-stream his horse was swept from under him by the violence of the current, and the priest was in imminent danger of being drowned, when he loudly invoked the help of the Blessed Virgin Mary and lost all consciousness. He stated that he did not know whether he fainted or not, but that when he recovered his senses, he found himself and horse on the opposite side of the river, safe and *perfectly dry!* His interview with the Bishop in Louisville was most cordial and consoling to both, and arrangements were perfected for the immediate foundation of a new house of the Loretto Sisters, in Perry county, Missouri.

On the 12th day of May, 1823,* twelve sisters,

*We have adopted the date of the St. Louis record, which coincides with Sister Eulalia's reminiscences. In his letter of June 9, 1823, Father Nerinckx says: "Two weeks ago I was again at Louisville with a colony of twelve sisters, their Mother, and the Dear Mother who went by the steamboat, *The Cincinnati*, to Louisiana, . . . seven hundred miles from here by water. Rt. Rev. Mr. Rosati, of the Lazarists, now named Bishop of Ala-

Sister Joanna Miles, superior, left for the new mission, after having heard Mass and received Holy Communion; and, as it was Loretto's first attempt at colonization out of Kentucky, the Dear Mother Juliana Wathen, accompanied them. They reached the Monastery of Gethsemani the same evening, and remained there till the next morning, when Rev. Father Nerinckx said Mass for them, and gave them Holy Communion, after which they resumed their journey, and reached the Convent of Bethania, near Fairfield, Nelson county, that night. Next morning they left Bethania, after Mass and Holy Communion, and arrived the same evening at Louisville, where they were very kindly received by a catholic gentleman, Mr. James Holden, and family. The next day, 15th of May, they were accompanied to the parish church of Louisville by Mr. Holden and Mr. Byrne, went a last time to confession, heard Mass, and were once more strengthened by the reception of the bread of angels; they then took leave of Father Nerinckx and went on board the steamer *Cincinnati* toward evening. The boat was a very unsafe one; three times during the night were they told to take to the skiffs, as the boat was thought to be sinking; in fact, it did sink on that trip, a few hours after the sisters had disembarked.

bama is to be their director." The details attending the foundation of this important mission are taken from recollections of Sister Eulalia Kelly, letters of Father Nerinckx, and from a MS. record found in the Chancery of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, kindly copied for us by Rev. D. J. Doherty of the cathedral.

After a very unpleasant trip of six days, they landed, on the 21st of May, at the house of Mr. Bird,* and remained there that night. As the little dwelling intended for the sisters was not yet under roof, they were kindly received the next day at the house of Mrs. Sarah Hayden, the mother of one of the sisters belonging to the band,† where they received the visit of Rev. Joseph Rosati the same day. This reverend gentleman heard their confessions, said Mass for them the next morning, and gave them Holy Communion, and continued that kind office on Sundays and Thursdays during the twenty-three days that they remained at Mrs. Hayden's.

The sisters took possession of their own new home, June 14, 1823, when Rev. Father Rosati, with one seminarian, accompanied them to their convent, named it, because of its poverty, *Bethlehem*, blessed it, and afterward gave them a very appropriate exhortation. The house was a small log cabin, constructed for the sisters by some of the inhabitants, but chiefly by the seminarians and clergymen, among whom were Rev.

* "Now occupied by Joseph Pratt," adds the St. Louis record, which seems to have been written in 1836; it was called *Pratt's landing*, near the present *St. Mary's landing*, twelve miles from Bethlehem.

† Sister Mechtildis Hayden was the daughter of the hospitable Mrs. Hayden, at whose house, three miles from the Seminary, near which Bethlehem Convent was being built, the sisters remained till their dwelling was finished. Mrs. Hayden's parents, and those of her husband, had moved with their families from Pottinger's Creek, in Kentucky, to Missouri, and they had been among the early catholic emigrants from Maryland.

Mr. Rosati, afterward Bishop of St. Louis, and Rev. Mr. De Neckere, afterward Bishop of New Orleans. It was erected near the parish church, the spot being selected because of its vicinity to a spring. This spring and a few acres of land were donated to the sisters by Mr. Joseph Manning. The poor religious tried to get along the best way they could, but it was rather up-hill work, and the fever and ague, which prostrated them all during the dry and sickly Summer of that year, made their experience of mission life all the more unpleasant. They had neither chimney nor stove; some forked sticks driven into the ground and covered with green bushes was their only kitchen for about four months. But they had been trained at the school of poverty and mortification, and it must have been a real feast when Dear Mother read to them the following refreshing letter, addressed by their venerable and austere guide, Rev. Father Nerinckx,

"*To Dear Mother, Mother Joanna and all the beloved Sisters in Christ Jesus Suffering and Mary Sorrowing, at the new house of Bethlehem. All our very best wishes.*

"LORETTO, 17*th of June*, 1823.

"Yesterday, coming from Calvary, I found your four letters at this place. I see, an uncommon providence of God has guided your ways and presided at all things, of which none could

have succeeded better. The house not being finished may somewhat interrupt your regular exercises, but I think your presence will encourage the work to have more of it better done, as you will be able to give informations how things ought to be. Have it all in a monastery-like manner as much as possible, poor with the bare necessities, out of sight, and separate as far as you can. Beware of elegancy, be satisfied with simplest everywhere except in your chapel, where extreme neatness—still no mundanity, that is, no worldly vanity or levity—ought to be found. You know what this talk and advice means; hold it from your old father.

"I feel happy more than I can express, that my expectations and wishes are so completely accomplished, by your having for a guide so worthy and so suitable a minister of the Lord; may he direct you for many years, and procure you all that bliss and happiness that you look for in the society here and hereafter! Give him my best respects and highest esteem, and offer my deepest veneration to your most excellent Bishop when convenient. Dear Mother will continue in establishing, etc., at Bethlehem, particularly so, if there be, in course of time, a prospect of any new one, which must not be done without our advice. I want you to continue sending informations, if they be of importance, at least once in two months. I received a letter from my countryman, Rev. Mr.

Lacroix,* last week; give him my thanks and compliments when he comes around. I said, and I think I would come and live on the Missouri, if two establishments were made amongst the Indians; but I expect the young Jesuits,†

*Charles De La Croix was born at Hoorebeke, Saint Corneille, Belgium, in 1792. He was preparing for his theological studies, when, owing to the intrusion of the Imperial Bishop into the See of Ghent, he left Belgium. He was soon after apprehended and incorporated in the regiment of the imperial guards. He escaped from Paris, and entered the Diocesan Seminary of Ghent, October 1, 1814, and was there ordained by Bishop Dubourg for the American mission. He arrived in America in 1817; was successively pastor of the Barrens, Mo., and St. Ferdinand and missionary among the Osages till 1823, when he gave up his mission to the Jesuit Fathers, owing to ill-health. He then became pastor of St. Michael's parish (Louisiana), but was soon compelled to give up his charge in 1826, and seek for better health in his native land, where he remained till 1829, when he returned to Louisiana. He resumed his pastoral duties at St. Michael, built there a beautiful chapel, and, upon the death of Bishop De Neckere, obtained leave from Vic. Gen. Blanc to return to Europe in 1834. The rest of his life was passed in Ghent—the Bishop of that See having appointed him a canon of his cathedral—in various duties of the sacred ministry. He died, August 20, 1869.

†They were: Rev. Fathers Van Quickenborne and Timmermans, with the young men whom Father Nerinckx had brought from Belgium, and Brothers Peter Demeyer, Henry Rysselman, and Charles Strahan. Of these reverend gentlemen Father Nerinckx writes, June 9, 1823: "After our sisters started from Louisville, Kentucky, to St. Louis, Louisiana, the following day arrived, at that place, fourteen Jesuits—two priests, three lay-brothers, and nine students—all Flemish, who came in America with me or after me. They come from Georgetown College, with six negroes, to settle at Florissant, on the Missouri, sixteen miles from St. Louis, which place Bishop Dubourg gives to them, with the missions of the wilds and civilized of that tract. Our sisters, as the Bishop told me, may, before long, be sent to the savages, named the Osages; if they be, I would go and join them."

my countrymen from Georgetown, will fill up this task, as they are gone that way, where the daughters of the Sacred Hearts are sacrificing their labors.

"I have had a little talk with our Bishop about going once more to Europe. . . .

"I send you all, my dear, poor children, my hearty wishes and God's best blessing; mind your happiness, and thank God without ceasing. Pray God that I may join you in heaven.

"C. NERINCKX."

By the 14th of September, the sisters had a room fitted up for a school, which was opened on the 24th of the same month with six pupils, and another room for a chapel, which enabled them to perform their devotions and hear Mass at home, for, up to this time, they had daily attended the parish church services. When Father Nerinckx visited them in July, 1824, their numbers had increased by the reception of seven orphans, at which the good father was uncommonly well pleased, and augured well for the future of the establishment.* Before leaving them, he made arrangements for the erection of a large frame church, and his sudden demise did not put a stop to the building. In April, 1825, it was ready for weather-boarding.

*In 1834, some sisters were sent from Bethlehem to take charge of a school at Frederickstown, in Madison county, Mo.; but, as they were unable to procure a deed to the property, they abandoned the place in April, 1837.

Boards, doors, window-frames, sashes, shutters, glass, paints—in fact, every thing pertaining to the new building, was on the spot, when the hand of an incendiary set fire to the structure two days before the finishing work was to be resumed, and it was reduced to ashes with all its contents. At this sad disaster, the sisters were very much discouraged; still, they went bravely on, and the next year they got their log-house plastered, built new brick additions, and were, at last, somewhat comfortable.

In the midst of all these trials, the sisters had the consolation of seeing the number of their scholars increase, and of knowing that their unremitting efforts for education were fully appreciated by their ecclesiastical superiors. From the Barrens, the Rev. Mr. Rosati wrote as early as May 24, 1823, to Mr. Dubourg, of Bordeaux, France: "Your very worthy brother (Bishop Dubourg) has just rendered to religion services as important as durable. During his journey to Washington, he secured a colony of Jesuits, who are expected every day. They will be established at Florissant, a French village, sixteen miles from St. Louis. On his return from Washington, our worthy prelate obtained twelve religious of the diocese of Bardstown. They are already here. We built for them a house, of the style here called *log-cabin*. They breathe poverty, mortification, and fervor. Their monastery will be a source of blessings to the country. Although

we began the establishment without funds, because of the poverty of our catholics, we are not in the least concerned about their sustenance; they will live by the product of their work; they themselves work in the garden, cut their fire-wood, weave the cloth for their dresses, make their own shoes, etc. Their life is very austere, and very edifying. All their establishments, which now number six, in Kentucky, are numerously attended by boarders and day-scholars, and increase in community members with a marvelous rapidity. They number already over one hundred and thirty. God be praised, who deigns to give us, through them, the means to make religion and piety flourish in these regions!"

And August 16th of the same year he wrote again: "I have already spoken to you of the establishment of religious, which, according to the orders of Monseigneur (Dubourg), is made here, a quarter of a mile from the Seminary. They are now in their new home, and have admitted a few orphans; as soon as the house is finished they will admit boarders and day scholars. You would be edified, my dear sir, if you saw those holy maidens. But what do I say? One sees only their dress, for a veil of coarse linen envelops the whole head. Their dress, furniture, every thing in fact, bespeaks poverty and humility. They work the whole day long, not only sewing, spinning, and weaving, but also working in the field. Perpetual silence, with

the exception of an hour's recreation after dinner, and frequent prayer sanctify their day, which is very long, for they get up at four A. M. Every thing about them reminds one of the old solitude of Thebais. Every quarter of an hour one exclaims: 'O Suffering Jesus!' and is answered by the others with: 'O Sorrowful Mary!' From time to time they may be heard singing canticles at the sound of the bell, without interrupting their work. Although not cloistered, they are entirely secluded, and our good people respect them so much that they never dare to intrude upon their silence. They go barefooted, have no other dresses but what they make themselves, of dyed linen in Summer and of wool in Winter, and they sleep upon a straw tick, spread on the bare floor. Their fare is not more delicate: no coffee, tea, or sugar. It is a true pleasure to witness their fervor, which equals that of the strictest communities of Europe in the palmiest days of their first establishment. They will, without doubt, draw the blessings of God on the parish. . . . They will also be of great service to the Seminary, weaving linen cloth, etc. Their house consists of three apartments twenty by eighteen feet, two stories high, two of which are joined together by a passage twelve by eighteen feet. We intend to build them a little chapel, but I do not know when we will have the means to do so."

Says Bishop Dubourg in a letter to his brother, dated March 20, 1824: "I think I informed

you of the fact that a gentleman gave me a small farm at *la Fourche*, where I desire to establish the Sisters of the Cross,* of which I have already the goodly number of seventeen in the State of Missouri. Four or five of them at *la Fourche* will soon swell to a score, which I design distributing in the different parishes, for the instruction of poor girls. This will be a source of incalculable good. The great advantage with these good sisters is that to establish them, it is enough to give them a piece of land, a hut, some farming implements, kitchen utensils, and looms; with these they themselves provide for all their wants, and find the means of giving a solid education to the children, in return for a few provisions furnished by the parents. They even take upon themselves the gratuitous care of destitute orphans. This is the admirable foundation of Mr. Nerinckx of Kentucky."

The Bethlehem establishment was subsequently removed to Cape Girardeau, in 1838.

In April, 1824, a new establishment was made in Casey county, Kentucky, under the name of *Mount Olivet*. This house existed only four years, under the direction of Mother Dorothea Fenwick, who, in that short time, had to mourn the loss of two of her sisters, viz., Sister Colette Miles and Eusebia Cooms. When the institu-

* The Friends of Mary at the Foot of the Cross. This and the two previous letters, are taken from: "*Nouvelles recues des Missions. Association de la Propagation de la Foi. 2me. edition.* No. V., pgg. 47, and 51, 52. 1825."

tion was broken up in 1828, the sisters took up their remains and buried them in the graveyard of Calvary Convent. Their spiritual director, Father Derigault, also died of consumption during that time, and Bishop Flaget, who loved him dearly, waited on him day and night for some days previous to his death. He had been buried seventeen months when the sisters left, and his mortal remains were removed to St. Thomas' Seminary burying-ground.

Unceasing in his efforts for the education of all classes, Father Nerinckx had long cherished a desire of establishing, in connection with his Society of the Friends of Mary, an institute of negro sisters, for the especial education of the blacks, whose neglected condition in servitude no one more sincerely deplored. With this end in view, he had caused a few young negro children to be adopted in Loretto; and in May, 1824, he exultingly communicated to Mother Bibiana the good news: "Two days ago, twelve young ladies offered themselves at Loretto for the little veil, amongst them our three blacks, who received nearly all the votes! Their dress is to be different, also the offices and employment, but they keep the main rules of the society; they will take the vows, but not the perpetual ones, before twelve years of profession. Their rules are set apart." *

That this charitable plan of our never tiring

* MSS. of Loretto Convent.

missionary was nipped in the bud, with another one for the education of the Indian girls, was owing to circumstances which we shall relate in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XXIX.

1824.

Crowning difficulties.—Rev. Guy Chabrat's opposition to Father Nerinckx.—Father Nerinckx leaves Kentucky.—His farewell letter to the Sisters of Loretto.—He goes to Missouri.—He visits Bethlehem, Perry Co.—His death at Ste. Genevieve, August 12, 1824.

Persecution is the common fate of all whom God calls to an extraordinary degree of sanctity. As we have had occasion to see, in the course of this biography, this perfecting element of virtue had not been wanting to the faithful priest; and, as is often witnessed in ecclesiastical history, the crowning persecution in his life was caused, innocently, we may hope, by the very ones who ought to have been the cheering comforters of Father Nerinckx' declining years.

Rev. Guy Chabrat, who was the confessor of Bethania Convent, had, of late, forwarded to the Bishop many complaints about the (in his opinion) uncalled-for severity of Father Nerinckx' direction. He was also trying to arrogate to himself the right of altering, in the branch establishment which he directed, the rules of the Society of the Friends of Mary; efforts which

Father Nerinckx opposed all the more strenuously from the fact that these rules, as already mitigated, had been approved of by the sacred congregation of the Propaganda, and indorsed by His Holiness, Pius VII. Unwilling, however, to create ill-feeling, and uselessly to perplex the minds of the sisters by clashing opinions, Father Nerinckx avoided, as much as possible, meddling with the affairs of the branch houses, and invariably referred to the Bishop the local superiors who consulted him on temporal or spiritual matters concerning the direction of their community. "I wish to meddle so little," he writes to Mother Bibiana, December 23, 1823, "that I never set my foot yet at Mount Mary's since the sisters have been there."

Rev. Mr. Chabrat censured Father Nerinckx' piety as visionary and overdone; he urged the removal of the venerable founder from his office of Ecclesiastical Superior of the Loretto Society; and, early in 1824, he wrote to Bishop Flaget a lengthy letter in which he enumerated all his complaints against Father Nerinckx' style of piety, censuring him for excessive rigor in his government of the sisters' communities, and for unnecessary austerity in his direction of souls. As a fact, however, Father Nerinckx was compelled continually to restrain the fervor of his spiritual daughters, instead of forcing hard obligations on them. The Bishop was much embarrassed by the position in which the letter of Rev. Chabrat placed him, for he held

both priests in great esteem. He made known to Father Nerinckx the complaints made against him, but left his future course to his own prudence. Owing to the persistent and strenuous opposition of the Rev. Guy Chabrat, their holy founder deemed it prudent and for the greater good of religion to leave the sisters and Kentucky; and, seeing in this disposition of Divine Providence a means of satisfying his thirst for the conversion of the Indians, he resolved upon going to Missouri. This resolution he communicated to Right Rev. Fishop Flaget, in answer to the letters which the Bishop had communicated to him, and he was allowed to go.

It was after this conclusion had been reached, that Father Nerinckx wrote to the Superior of Bethania the following letter:

"GETHSEMANI, *25th of May*, 1824.

"*Dear Mother Bibiana, and all your Sisters: May God's best blessing abound with you!*

". . . . My time of starting on the intended journey is close by, and I feel not very able at present to undertake it. I know not what consequences it will have, nor whether I will ever see you or write to you any more. God will dispose of it. I wish you all to join in prayers with me, that Almighty God may forgive all blunders, ignorances, and excesses I have committed during the thirty-eight years which I have passed very unworthily and unprofitably in the ministry, and that He may

grant pardon for all the harm I have done these twelve years in the Society. May the Lord and His Dear Mother be merciful unto me, as on Mount Calvary they were unto the good thief! . . . Be you all happy in life here, and glorious after death. I greet you all in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary!

"C. NERINCKX,

"P. S. Best wishes to Rev. Mr. Chabrat, etc."

How the humble priest communicated his intentions to his dear children of Loretto, is told us in the following pathetic account given us by Sister Isabella Clarke,* who had been elected

*Sister Isabella, of whose early vocation to the Loretto Society we had already occasion to speak, was a saintly soul, whom I had the pleasure of meeting in 1874. Upon being told that I intended to write the life of the venerable founder of Loretto, tears of joy and gratitude rolled down her cheeks, and she furnished the writer with many details which lend interest and charm to the narrative. She died the death of the just, on a day which Father Nerinckx, in his devotion for the sufferings of Jesus and sorrows of Mary, had set apart as a great holiday of his Society—Good Friday, 1875, at the very hour when Jesus Suffering consummated his sacrifice upon the Cross on Calvary. The following is the simple yet eloquent notice sent me of her death:

"Died at Loretto, Marion county, Ky., on Good Friday, 1875, at three o'clock in the evening, after intense suffering, Sister Isabella Clarke."

Sister Isabella was born in 1800, near Holy Cross church. Her parents were Ignatius Clarke and Aloysia Hill. She received the habit, in 1815, from the hands of Rev. Father Nerinckx, founder of the Society of the Sisters of Loretto. The deceased was local Superior of the Loretto House, and Dear Mother at the time of the death of Father Nerinckx. She was a most useful member of the Society, and, having adorned it

Superior of Loretto that same year: "Some five or six weeks before our dear and lamented founder, Rev. Charles Nerinckx, left Loretto, he signified to us his intention of leaving the diocese; an announcement which came upon us like a thunderbolt! We could not, would not, consent to it, although we had for some time perceived his embarrassment and dejection, which had caused us much anxiety. To convince us of the necessity of his going he read to us part of a letter of eleven pages, which he had received. (He did not tell us from whom it came.) Oh! I can not describe the language and force of that letter! Among other things, it said, that 'there was not a priest in the diocese willing to hear his confession!' . . . He then said to us: 'You see, my dear children, the necessity I am under of going to some place where I can go to confession, and be able to do a little good, for it is evident that I can not do any thing more here. As God gave me, so have I done for you.' You may well imagine our grief and consternation; no words of mine can convey it. Yet, we had so much compassion and sympathy for him in his then sad situation, that we had not the courage to oppose his decision, except by our tears and grief, joined with fervent prayers to our dear Lord and His Blessed Mother to assist and protect him, and send him back to us."

with her many virtues for sixty years, she died in peace, surrounded by her sisters in religion.—R. I. P.

Before leaving, Father Nerinckx wrote a farewell letter to the sisterhood; which is up to this day read, amidst the silent tears of the community, on the anniversary of his departure for Missouri, and which we here insert in full. The writing betrays great emotion and bodily weakness.

FATHER NERINCKX' FAREWELL LETTER.

J. M. J.

"LORETTO, 29*th of May*, 1824.

"*To the Dear Mother, Mothers and Sisters of the Loretto House and Society, all hail!*

"Being about to start on my intended journey, which may put an end to my life, and probably to any intercourse or meddling with the Loretto House or Society, I leave, as a short farewell, these few lines to the Loretto House, having kept this place as a home since it was begun. It is not strange, my dear sisters, to find in this vale of tears, that mass of afflictions which holy Job affirms to be the lot of all born of women: *multis miseriis*; of that, my age and condition, is to me a present and sure conviction. We are all, having been children of wrath, doomed to drink of this bitterness. Still, the Merciful Lord, the darling object and sweetness of the Loretto devotion, called, and truly so, the Man of Sorrows, by his holy passion and death, has entirely altered this unhappy condition into a state of real felicity; since he has set apart for us such a great weight of rewards and glory, for

the light sufferings of a momentary life. This reflection prevents me from making any remarks of an unpleasant nature, willing to bury in oblivion all that has passed.

"To leave you some knowledge of my sixty-three years of life, which are to me as many years of shame and confusion, and for which I entreat you to obtain for me by your prayers, some months of true and real repentance:

"I had the happiness to be born of religious parents, being the oldest of seven brothers and seven sisters, of which the greatest number were blessed with a religious call, nothwithstanding the great interruptions caused by dreadful revolutions, all directed against religion. I thank God for His mercies! and for having preserved our family from joining any of the errors and blunders, of which thousands have been the victims. I was sent to school at six years of age; to the higher studies at twelve, going through the different classes of humanity, philosophy, and divinity, in different places, but mostly at Louvain and Mechlin. I was made a priest at twenty-four, and that year sent as under-pastor to our cathedral, where I remained eight years. In 1794, I was sent as parish priest to a place called Meerbeke, five miles from Louvain. The French drove me from here three years after that, having given a *prise-de-corps* or order to take me, for having said Mass without taking the prescribed declaration, it being against my religion and conscience. From that I sheltered

as in a prison, in the Hospital of Dendermonde, where, being requested to do so, I had for six years the spiritual direction of nuns and sick; a thing I could safely do, not being known by any one and never coming out of my shelter. In 1804, the 3d of July, having before refused another oath asked of me in order to go to my former parish, because, with the advice of good and learned men, I found it contrary to conscience, I started for America with letters of recommendation to the Right Rev. Bishop Carroll from the Princess Gallitzin. I had a companion, Rev. Mr. Guny of the Order of St. Benedict, of Cambray, who intended to join the Trappist Order; and after three months of navigation at sea, amongst storms, sickness, and other miseries, having lost forty-two of our crew, we arrived at Baltimore the 14th of November.

"My intention, at that time, was to go to any place, even Indians, where it was thought I could do any good. The Nuncio of the Pope, Ciamberlani, had offered me to go to his missions, the Cape of Good Hope, but wanted me to have a companion of our language, which I had not. The College of the Jesuits of Georgetown harbored me for four months; there I picked up a few English words. I then went to Conewago to meet the Trappist monks, with whom I left that place for Kentucky. I arrived before them, the 2d day of July, 1805, at the house of Rev. S. T. Badin, the only priest in Kentucky at that time. I staid with him seven

years without any disturbance, having leave from him to act in my places and stations as I thought proper. I have, with God's help and some alms from my country, built some churches and procured some establishments for the church. I had, also, at the time, made an attempt to start a female school and nunnery at Holy Mary's, but met with no encouragement from laity or clergy. Rev. Mr. Badin made the second trial close by his house; the house, nearly finished, was laid in ashes, and the project disappeared.

"At the end of my seventh year, very unexpectedly, as may be seen in my advices, another attempt was made for a female school at St. Charles. It took root, and grew to what it is now, without any man having much claim to its rise. About this time, I left Rev. Mr. Badin, as my presence seemed to be necessary at Loretto, being stationary priest of St. Charles congregation. The Society began in 1812. In 1816, I went to Rome by Loretto. In 1820, I took another trip to Europe for the benefit of the Society, for some difficulties in the ministry, etc. It is now (1824) better than twelve years that I have had the charge of the Society, but particularly of the Loretto House, except three years and the half of absence, not without difficulties and contradictions. As I never was fit for any charge or any part of the ministry, which, before God and men, I freely grant and agree to, I am willing to believe that the cause

of all the difficulties and uneasiness originated from me, for which I beg to be pardoned by Almighty God, the congregations, and the Society.

"Being once more proscribed from my native country, in 1822, by the Holland government, not, I hope, for crimes before God, and my present situation having become unpleasant, and, as far as I know, unprofitable or perhaps injurious to religion, I am under the necessity of gathering, at sixty-three, my strength of forty-three years and go to a new region. I feel no less resolution of mind, but I know not whether my strength of body will hold out. However, I intend to make the trial, with God's assistance.

"You have here a short detail of the poor life of an unworthy priest, who has been in this country for about nineteen years, twelve years about the Loretto Society, and, in all, thirty-nine in the ministry. It is unnecessary to tell you, my dear sisters in Christ, what a hard and terrible judgment this poor wretch will shortly meet with, on account of his temerity in the holy ministry, without any regard to his own corruption, knowing that it is said: *judicium durissimum his qui praesunt fiet*—very hard will the judgment be for those that are in authority. I beg of you to have pity on me!

"Should you ask me now my principal motives for leaving these parts, and what I am going to do next? Although there be no real profit or necessity in the answers to those que-

ries, I see no great impropriety in them, considering that the long knowledge you have of their nature will justify the harmless curiosity. I say then, if I know myself, that three great causes urge me to move: 1. The impossibility of holding out for want of temporals, having no help but from Europe. 2. The sake of peace, which is already somewhat interrupted, and, in my opinion, will always be tottering with the clergy and the Society. 3. The rest and tranquillity of conscience, which I can not have here on account of difficulties in practice which are lately come or surely increased, for which, it seems, no remedy can be obtained. These are the main motives: if these could be cured, the rest might be neglected.

"As to my views and intentions, they are not yet decided or really settled. I will take Providence for guide; that *Providence* which brought me in and will carry me out, and has presided over the whole course of my life; I always find myself safe and easy with It. It was even so the case with the Apostles and numbers of their followers. Still, some of the intentions which strike my mind are the following:

"God's will at the head, and His honor.

"The propagation of the devotion to Jesus suffering and Mary sorrowing.

"The Hospital Sisters.

"The orphans assistance.

"The conversion of Indians.

"The preservation of the institute's zeal and purity; its propagation; its consolidation.

"The providing of its brotherhood by its present directors.

"The peace with colleagues.

"The settling of conscience.

"The preparation for death. . . . Burial.

"Final penance.

"The Flemish mission.

"The heremitical life.

"The fixing of my writings.

"The salvation of the blacks.

"All this, or part of it, if I can suit, and God thinks fit.

"You see here a great number of intentions for old age, weak body, and poor soul, with scanty talents. The work can not be much; yet the will may please God still. God's designs, always adorable and good, ought to be fiulfilled, however opposed to our feelings and opinions or notions.

"My will I leave in the hands of Mr. Thomas Livers. I leave to the establishments what they are at present in possession of, except what I may need for my new undertakings, if any take place. This, I think, can not be before the Fall or next Spring.

"If you inquire whether I know what will become of you? this, I can not tell. But, from my present experience, from the nature of things and from the condition of man, without pretending to any revelation or gift of prophecy,

there is not a spark of doubt in my mind but you will undergo great changes from your present state, which the far greatest number of you looks upon as happy; you must only pray that what is to come may be for the better; it was not in my power to do more or better for you. As God gave me, so I did for poor Society.

"As to advice, for which you have so often applied, I hardly know what to say. There never was a man who stood more in need of it himself, and none who was less able to give advice. The directions which have been given by word or writing have proved to be unbecoming, too particular, and full of incorrectness, not to mention worse appellations which have been applied to them. I see no good or propriety in giving any, being sure that they would meet with opposition at the first glance. However, I can say that the whole sum of all my words and writings is nearly contained in the *Morning Manna*,* read every day before Mass, with which I desire you always to comply.

"I wish to leave you a short paraphrase of the standard of the Society, which I beg you to say, now and then, for poor old

"C. NERINCKX."

THE SUFFERING JESUS
AND
THE SORROWFUL MARY
BLESS US ALL!
FAREWELL!!

*See Chapter XXX.

Father Nerinckx left Loretto, June 16, 1824, accompanied by Brother James Van Ryssel-berghe. On his way to Missouri, he stopped a day in Union county, with the Rev. Mr. Durbin; and then went by way of Shawneetown to the Barrens. After a laborious journey of one hundred and thirty leagues on horseback, the difficulties of which were materially increased by his wretched state of health, he reached the convent of his sisters in *Bethlehem*, Perry county, Mo., July 2, 1824. "The sisters were not expecting him; he stepped into the hall, and thus took them by surprise. They were wild with delight. Having allowed them a few minutes to give vent to their feelings, Father Nerinckx bent his way to their chapel, and all followed him. He gave the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, and a nice little instruction, in which he repeated several times that he had come to finish his days with them, the Sisters of Bethlehem, and have his bones laid in their graveyard, supposing they would allow him a place there." *

He then went to the Seminary of the Barrens, where he remained a few weeks. "During his stay he frequently visited the sisters, gave many instructions, exhortations, etc., and appeared to be animated with even more than his usual zeal. During one of his exhortations he foretold that the period which would put an end to his mortal career was fast approaching; that in a few days

* Reminiscences of Sister Eulalia.

he would cease to be an inhabitant of this earth; that he would be the first to be buried in the sister's graveyard, and he declared he would die at the distance of about twenty miles from the Seminary. The event subsequently verified the prediction." * He also often said Mass in the convent chapel, "and, on one occasion, his sufferings were innocently increased by an involuntary mistake of the sister sacristan, who gave him what she thought to be wine for the Holy Sacrifice, but which proved to be some poisonous drug left in a bottle." †

On the 26th of July, Father Nerinckx left the Barrens early in the morning, and said Mass in the convent chapel for the last time. He gave the religous habit to the Misses Mary Stewart and Elizabeth Tucker, the last sisters who received it from the hands of their venerable founder, and he made a final exhortation to the community. "He declared in a very impressive manner, it would be the last they would receive from him; he pointed out in a precise manner the changes which would take place after his death, and many events which have since occurred; but at the same time he ordered the community of Bethlehem to obey in every point their Right Rev. Bishop, Joseph Rosati, for whom he expressed the most tender, the most sincere friendship, and in whom he placed confidence." ‡

* Record of St. Louis Cathedral. *Sup. Cit.*

† Reminiscences of Sister Eulalia.

‡ Record of St. Louis Cathedral. *Sup. Cit.*

After breakfast he conversed awhile with the teachers, whom he had directed to write a letter to the Blessed Virgin which he would himself present to their dear Mother, the Queen of Heaven; and having made several ineffectual attempts to leave, he finally broke away from them, with a "God bless you! Pray for me!" jumped into the saddle and was off for St Louis.

Bishop Dubourg, upon taking charge of the See of New Orleans, had consecrated the Right Rev. Joseph Rosati, as his successor in St. Louis, in the beginning of April, 1824. Father Nerinckx applied to Bishop Rosati for the most needy and forsaken mission of his diocese, for, in his humility, he believed himself no longer suited to be at the head of an important parish, or to direct the community of sisters he had founded. From St. Louis, he went to Florissant, sixteen miles north-west of this city, and near the Bluffs of the Missouri river, in order to visit the new establishment of Flemish Jesuits, most of whom had come over with him from Belgium on his last trip, in 1821, and he spent a few days with Father Van Quickenborne and his young friends in edifying fervor and holy joy at the encouraging prospects of the mission which they had come to fulfill among the Indians. Thence he returned to St. Louis, and, whilst on a visit to the Indian agent, he had the pleasure of an interview with a savage chief, and made arrangements with them to send twelve Indian girls to Bethlehem; as soon

as their education was completed, others were to take their place with the sisters, and the number of twelve kept up, the government to pay the tuition. Elated at the success of this his most cherished plan, and calculating, with a saint's shrewdness, that this annual income would enable the sisters to take care of a larger number of orphans, he wrote to the Mother of Bethlehem to have a house put up immediately for the accommodation of the little Indians, and then and there received thirty-six orphans to be sent to Perry county. The house was built, but the Indian girls never came, owing to Father Nerinckx' death. But the thirty-six orphans and a helpless old lady did come; they were their father's last legacy, and the sisters took them in, loved them for his sake, and underwent most heroic privations to provide for them during the five years of their stay.

Having received leave to exercise the functions of the holy ministry in Bishop Rosati's diocese, Father Nerinckx was advised to return to Bethlehem Convent, and perfect the arrangements for his new foundation of Indian girls, before taking possession of any particular mission, and thither he set out on horseback, on the 2d of August. He made haste to carry to his beloved sisters the good news of their increasing usefulness. "His heart burned within him," writes Bishop Flaget,* "whilst his imagi-

* Letter of Bishop Flaget to Bishop England. U. S. Catholic Miscellany, December 6, 1824.

nation pictured to itself the good prospects which lay open to his hopes. On his road, however, was a path to a settlement of eight or ten catholic families who had not seen a priest for more than two years. Desirous of doing all the good in his power, he assembled them, heard their confessions, gave them instructions, and celebrated the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. He was thus occupied from a little after daybreak until toward three o'clock P. M. Seeing the good dispositions of those catholics, he proposed to them to build a church, in order to encourage priests to come to them. A subscription was immediately opened by those present; out of his small means he gave $10.00, and signatures for over nine hundred were instantly affixed to the sheet. After this exertion in such broiling weather, he felt feverish symptoms, and complained to Brother Van Rysselberghe of being unwell. He had promised the people to say Mass the following day at nine o'clock in the morning, but was so ill that he deferred it. The following morning he was a little better, and said an early Mass. He then told Brother James Van Rysselberghe that he thought he was able to go to St. Genevieve, which was about twelve miles distant. When they arrived there, he was not able to stand. He was received by the Rev. Mr. Dahmen * with great kindness and affection. On the Sunday following, which was

* Father Dahmen was a Lazarist.

the 8th of August, Brother James assisted him into the chapel, where he heard Mass. During Sunday and part of Monday, he was not very ill, until about two or three o'clock in the afternoon, when he was taken by a violent fever, which was so severe that, on Tuesday, he was quite unable to do any thing for himself. On Wednesday, he was worse. Three physicians were called in by Brother James to hold a consultation, but they could afford him no relief; they said he would surely die. On Thursday morning, between eight and nine o'clock, the Rev. Mr. Dahmen assisted him for death," and gave him the last sacraments; and, "at five in the evening of the same day, August 12, 1824, Father Nerinckx expired,* in the sixty-third year of his age.

"Bishop Flaget was greatly affected by the intelligence of Father Nerinckx' death. He delivered in the cathedral a glowing eulogy of the good missionary's life, and held him up as a model of every virtue.' Some years previously (in 1815) he had recorded the following estimate of the character of the deceased in his journal:

"'If the good Mr. Nerinckx had done nothing else but to establish the Sisterhood of Loretto in this country, nothing more would have been necessary to assure him of salvation at the moment of death. But when we add to this the immense

* Letter of Sister Ann, of Calvary, to Rev. John Nerinckx, of Somerstown, and to his sister. London Catholic Miscellany, April, 1825.

labors of his apostolate, it is then that we are led to bless thee, oh Lord! for raising up such men in these unhappy times, to serve as models to their contemporaries.'" *

Father Nerinckx' visit at the Barrens, although short, had also left a great impression of his sanctity upon the Lazarist Fathers. Shortly after his death, Rev. Odin, afterward Archbishop of New Orleans, wrote to a friend in France: "The 12th of August, the good God has taken away from us a very saintly priest, a great missionary, Mr. Nerinckx, who came out here from Flanders; . . . the labors which he has performed for the extension of the faith are incredible. . . ." And after enumerating his works he adds: "In the middle of last July, he came to visit our sisters. Oh! how I loved to be with him! He prescribed for me all sorts of little practices for the advancement of souls, communicated to me all that his own experience had discovered to be most advantageous for the conversion of heretics; and, above all, he spoke to me frequently of the Blessed Virgin. . . . His holy life was crowned with a no less precious death. Our Barrens have the honor of possessing his body He is interred in the cemetery of our sisters. We regret him very much." †

* Life of Bishop Flaget, by Right Rev. M. J. Spalding, pg. 240.

† Letter of Mr. Odin to Mr. Cholleton, V. G. of the diocese of Lyons. Annales de la Propagation de la Foi, Vol. 2., pg. 369.

Says Rev. Father Bessonies, V. G. of the diocese of Vincennes:

God had ordered that Father Nerinckx should give up in his heart the Loretto Society, his own child, the only thing he was attached to in this world. Like Abraham who was ordered to sacrifice his only son, and was rewarded for his faith and obedience before the holocaust was consummated, Father Nerinckx had made the sacrifice, and, on his way to greet for the last time the last house of his dear children, the Friends of Mary, he died and was buried in their midst.

"Father Nerinckx was a noted man in the catholic church in its early days. . . . He told his parishioners that when bitten by rattlesnakes they should come to him to be cured. He gave no medicine; merely blessed them, and they departed cured. After he had left Kentucky and gone to the Far West, it is said the bells chimed one night without the help of mortal hands, and it was found that he had died at that very hour in his new location. Ah! he was a Saint!"—*Indianapolis News*, 1878.

CHAPTER XXX.

1824.

Burial at the Barrens, Mo.—"Father Nerinckx is in Heaven!"—Removal of his remains to Loretto, Ky.—His Epitaph.—Supernatural Events.—Rev. Chabrat again.—Tributes to Father Nerinckx' memory.—Loretto convent removed to his first residence, Marion county, Ky.

"Brother James had," at Father Nerinckx' desire, "sent for Right Rev. Rosati to come and see the reverend father before he died, but the Bishop came too late. He arrived on Friday morning, and, finding him dead, told them not to bury him at that place, but to take his corpse to Bethlehem, and bury him where the sisters were, and that he himself would go on before and tell the sisters that their father and founder was dead, and that his corpse would be brought there that night."* But Father Dahmen entreated the Bishop to honor the funeral procession by his presence, and he sent a member of his congregation with the sad message to Perry county.

On the night of Father Nerinckx' death, a

*Letter of Sister Ann, already cited. London Catholic Miscellany, April, 1825.

very remarkable incident had taken place at the Convent of Bethlehem: "Sisters Benedicta Fenwick and Mechtildis Hayden were making the hour's adoration of the Most Holy Sacrament, when the latter, hastily rising off her knees, went to Sister Benedicta and said to her in a low voice: 'Father Nerinckx is dead, I know he is. He is now in the presence of the Blessed Virgin whom he so tenderly loved on earth; and, in a short time, I shall follow.'* Sister Mechtildis had been suffering for a long time from a cancer in the head, and was so very sick with consumption that she had to remain in bed the next day. On the evening of that day, August 13th, 1824, and whilst the corpse was being brought from Ste. Genevieve, a similar scene, as strongly savoring of the supernatural, and the truth of which is vouched for by Sister Eulalia Kelly, who was an eye-witness to the fact, occurred toward nine o'clock, P. M. Sister Mechtildis got out of bed and began running about the house, singing: 'Praises to the Lord! Our dear Father Nerinckx is in heaven! Alleluia!' Thinking that her suffering had made the poor sister light in the head, her companions did all they could to quiet her; but to all their entreaties she only answered: 'Father Nerinckx is in heaven!' About a quarter of an hour later, the messenger from Ste. Genevieve actually arrived, and brought them the first news of the death of their founder, adding that

* Record of St. Louis Cathedral. *Sup. Cit.*

the funeral procession was on its way to Bethlehem, and would arrive there some time during the night.

"The sisters immediately repaired to the Seminary church, and passed the night in prayers, sighs, and thanksgivings, until the arrival of the episcopal escort at two o'clock, A. M., with the mortal remains, which were deposited in the church. Brother James Van Ryssel-berghe, who had attended Father Nerinckx ever since he left Kentucky, acceded, the next morning, to the pleadings of the sisters, and raised the lid of the coffin to give them a chance to behold once more the features of the dear departed; but they had scarcely time to satisfy this pious wish, for the seminarians having heard that Father Nerinckx had died of yellow fever, instantly forced down the lid, for fear of propagating the disease.

"The funeral obsequies were celebrated on Saturday morning, August 14th, Rev. Father Odin, of the Barrens, singing a Solemn High Mass, in the presence of the Bishop of St. Louis, who, being too fatigued from the effects of his journey on horseback, could not do so himself. He, however, performed the *absolution* over the corpse, and preached a moving sermon on the occasion; the corpse was then committed to its final resting-place in the graveyard of the sisters. 'But Brother James Van Rysselberghe, who had been so faithful to Father Nerinckx during the course of their journey, and who had

attended him constantly day and night while he was sick, engaged some persons to build a tomb for him; and, on the Monday following, which was the 16th of August, 1824, the remains were taken out of the ground, and inclosed in the tomb.'" *

"I have said nothing," writes Sister Eulalia, "of the sisters heartrending grief at the death of Father Nerinckx. It can not be told, and no pen can describe it. The sobs, which they in vain tried to smother, bore testimony of their grief, their filial affection, and their sense of their great loss. When his tomb was about being closed, they all surrounded it, and each one placed in it some little memento. Every day after dinner, for months after, all the sisters and pupils went in procession to his tomb to offer prayers for the repose of his soul; yet we felt more like praying to him, and asking his intercession with God for ourselves. I have often heard the good Bishop Rosati say he considered the remains of Father Nerinckx as the most precious thing in his diocese, and that, though the saintly Bishop Flaget and the Superiors of Loretto were constantly writing to him for permission to bring them to Loretto, he would never grant that permission."

Yet, after nine years of pleading, their perseverance overcame his determination, and the long-desired treasure was taken up by Brother Charles Gilbert, of Loretto, one of Father Ner-

* Letter of Sister Ann. *Sup. Ct.*

inckx' most enthusiastic admirers, on December 16, 1833, and carried to Loretto, Marion county, Ky. When he approached the main entrance, Brother Gilbert sent word to the Superior; the convent bell was tolled, and the whole community went out to receive the mortal remains of their cherished father. Mother Josephine Kelly and Mother Generose Mattingly had the happiness of carrying the precious relics to the church, a melancholy pleasure and honor which they never forgot. And thus, where the humble pioneer missionary first pitched his tent, his spiritual children, who had since removed to that spot, erected the monument of his well-earned glory.

The body was deposited in a suitable tomb, situated in the center of the Loretto conventual graveyard. It was built of brick, covered with plain oak plank, painted and sanded in imitation of stone, and surmounted by a large funereal urn. On each side of the brick-work was a projecting tablet with suitable inscriptions.

Subsequently, this was replaced by a white marble monument, the base of which is a parallelogram, about six feet long by three feet wide. The upper slab is adorned with a cross, at the foot of which is engraved:

†

BLESSED ARE THE DEAD WHO
DIE IN THE LORD.
—*Rev.* 14: 13.

On the sides are engraved the following inscriptions:

At the head:

LORETTO'S MITE
OF
ESTEEM AND VENERATION
FOR ITS FOUNDER.

DO NOT FORSAKE
PROVIDENCE,
AND HE WILL NEVER
FORSAKE YOU.—C. N.

On the foot-end of the monument, facing it, we read:

REQUIESCAT
IN PACE.
PRECIOUS IN THE SIGHT OF THE
LORD, IS THE DEATH OF HIS SAINTS.
—*Ps.* 115.

On the right side:

IN MEMORY OF
REV. CHARLES NERINCKX,
A NATIVE OF FLANDERS, WHO DIED AUGUST 12, 1824, IN MISSOURI. HIS REMAINS WERE TRANSLATED TO KENTUCKY, IN 1833, BY BROTHER CHARLES GILBERT, AT THE REQUEST OF THE LORETTO SOCIETY, AND INTERRED AT THIS PLACE BY RIGHT REV. BISHOP FLAGET, AND THE REV. G. J. CHABRAT, SUPERIOR OF THE SOCIETY.

On the left side:

MR. NERINCKX
CAME TO KENTUCKY IN 1805, AND DEVOTED HIMSELF ZEALOUSLY TO THAT LABORIOUS MISSION, DURING WHICH TIME, HE WAS NOMINATED TO THE DIOCESE OF NEW ORLEANS. BUT HE REFUSED THAT DIGNITY, AND, IN 1812, HE, WITH THE APPROBATION OF THE HOLY SEE, INSTITUTED THE LORETTINES, OR FRIENDS OF MARY, AND DIED IN PERFORMING THE VISITATION OF THE ORDER, AT STE. GENEVIEVE, MISSOURI, AGED SIXTY-THREE.

Though willing that the Loretto Mother-House should possess Father Nerinckx' remains, the Sisters of Bethlehem felt sorely aggrieved at parting with them, and asked to be allowed to retain some memento of their founder. The request was granted, and Brother Gilbert left them the lower bone of the right hand's middle finger, which Mother Superior temporarily deposited on the shelf of a closet, enveloped in a piece of paper. Sister Margaret (now of Cape Girardeau) cleaning house, one day, inadvertently threw that little parcel, together with some sweepings, into the fire, when the thought struck her that that must have been the greatly prized relic of Father Nerinckx. Greatly distressed in mind, and alarmed at what she considered a great fault of carelessness, and at the sorrow the accident would cause to the sisters, she went to examine the ashes in the hearth (that being all that was left of what she had thrown into the fire), as people will sometimes almost unconsciously act although convinced of the inutility of their search, when, to her amazement, she actually found the bone, enveloped in the paper, untouched! *

This event created quite a sensation in the community, and augmented, if that were possible, the veneration they entertained for the blessed memory of their saintly founder. They, however, abstained from all outside comment on

* Reminiscences of Sister Isabella Clarke.

the subject, when a more astonishing occurrence drew the attention of the people to the sacred spot where Father Nerinckx' remains had rested for nearly nine years. The sisters religiously guarded it, and ornamented it yearly with grasses and flowers, bright emblems of their undying affection for their spiritual father; daily visits were made to the grave, and the surrounding settlers not unfrequently came to pray at the foot of the cross which overshadowed its grassy plot. A good old lady, living near the Barrens, Mrs. Burke by name, had been blind for many years. All kinds of remedies had been ineffectually tried, and the most skillful practitioners had given her up as a hopeless case. Having known Father Nerinckx, and entertaining a high respect and veneration for his memory, she finally resolved to apply to him for her cure. She was so positive, so fully convinced that God would grant to his intercession, what human means had failed to effect, that no entreaties of her friends could deter her from undertaking a pilgrimage to Bethlehem, which, considering her blindness and the infirmities of old age, they pronounced dangerous. "Take me to the grave of *the old Saint!*" she persistently repeated, and they finally acceded to her request. Mrs. Burke was led to the grave; stooping down, she took up a handful of earth from its surface, and, full of faith, rubbed it to her eyes, . . . a cry of joy and gratitude startled the less confident beholders of the

scene. . . . Mrs. Burke's eye-sight had been instantly restored! *

As faithful children of Holy Mother Church, we refrain from characterizing these occurrences, upon which she never pronounces but with the greatest reserve. God's power is, and will ever be made manifest in the glorious death of His Saints, as His patience and endurance are made to astonish the world in their persecuted lives; but the church alone can pass a decision upon the facts.

Father Nerinckx had not had the opportunity of acquainting Bishop Flaget with the fact of his being received into the diocese of Missouri; and the news of his death was the first confirmation the Bishop of Bardstown received of his final removal from Kentucky. Judging from the circumstances of his departure, and knowing how zealous and saintly a priest Father Nerinckx was, he had little doubt in his mind but what Bishop Rosati would welcome him with outstretched arms; but, unwilling to bestow his place on another, so long as there was the faintest hope left for his return to Kentucky, he temporarily charged Father Chabrat with the direction of the Loretto Society. "After the death of Rev. Father Nerinckx," writes Sister Isabella Clarke, who very reluctantly stated to us these facts, which several other sisters yet living also witnessed, "the Right Rev. Bishop Flaget of this diocese came to Loretto accom.

* Reminiscences of Sister Isabella Clarke.

panied by Rev. J. P. Chabrat, whom he installed in Father Nerinckx' place as our ecclesiastical superior. Being thus placed in full possession of his house and its contents, he, for some reason, burnt all of Rev. Nerinckx' writings and a considerable number of ascetical books, which the holy missionary had collected in Belgium during his journeys through that country in 1816–17 and 1820–21. Some time after that, he found out that I had Rev. Father Nerinckx' farewell letter, and he ordered me to bring it to him; he took it from my hands and threw it into the fire. Fortunately, three copies of it had been taken which escaped the fire." Yes, dear Mother, and more fortunate still, one of your sisters seized the original as it fell on the opposite side of the burning heap of books which the gentleman had built in the yard, and succeeded in hiding it, whilst he was facing you; and its venerable looking pages yet gladden the hearts of your spiritual daughters!

Personally convinced that Father Nerinckx was too rigid, Rev. Chabrat took that rather high-handed measure to counteract his severity, and to put an end to the grief which the good sisters were unable to repress at the loss of their devoted father. But the saintly director's rules and his spirit of mortification were already too deeply written on the hearts of his children, and too carefully treasured in their memories not to escape the devouring element. Although not written on paper, they still con-

tinue, to this day, to fashion and form the spiritual life of his daughters, the Friends of Mary at the Foot of the Cross.

Well did the Right Rev. Bishop Flaget write in his letter to Bishop England, of Charleston:* "The attempt of death to snatch Mr. Nerinckx from us has been ineffectual, for he still lives among us in his works; and the monuments of the zeal of my virtuous friend are so multiplied in my diocese, and his generous self-devotion so well appreciated, that his name and that of his beneficent country are embalmed in the memory of my flock. The legacy which my people value most is that of the Friends of Mary at the Foot of the Cross; this admirable institution is their delight. The virtuous daughters of this Society are the edification of all who know them; their singular piety and their penitential lives remind us of all that we have read of the ancient monasteries of Palestine and Thebais. Their number is over one hundred; they have charge of six schools. . . . It is now nearly twenty years since Mr. Nerinckx arrived in Kentucky, and has edified its inhabitants by his truly apostolic mode of life; a mode well worthy of the first ages of the church. During a considerable time, he had to serve alone with Rev. Mr. Badin, who well deserves the title of founder of this diocese, of the several congregations of this immense region. The continual traveling which Mr. Nerinckx

*U. S. Catholic Miscellany, for December 24, 1824.

was obliged to undergo, at all seasons of the year, and exposed to every inconvenience, would have terrified the most enterprising pioneer. As, at the time of his arrival, there were but one or two churches built, and the catholics were scattered through the country, he went about from settlement to settlement, celebrating the holy mysteries from house to house, hearing confessions every morning, and obliged to fast almost every day in the year. His instructions were extremely simple and quite to the point.

"Feeling greatly the inconvenience which arose from celebrating the divine mysteries in rooms devoted to every worldly purpose, he did his best to inspire all catholics whom he used to visit, with a zeal for the construction of churches, and endowing them with lands for the support of pastors. His exertions, in this respect, were crowned with perfect success. The Catholic Church of Kentucky has acquired much land, which is worth very little at present, but which will one day have considerable value. We count ten churches built solely by his exertions; also six convents of nuns, and as many oratories. He made two journeys to Europe, in order to procure the means necessary for those great works; and the valuables which he procured exceeded the amount of $15,000. This aid was principally drawn from religious Flanders."

Another writer in the same periodical * says: "The memory of Rev. Mr. Nerinckx will be

* *Discipulus*, in U. S. Catholic Miscellany, December 1, 1824.

long cherished in Kentucky. The many young people whom he has trained up in the love of God and the practice of virtue, will hereafter speak of him to their children with a pious enthusiasm. Every one who knew him must give a grateful testimony of his zeal. His vigilant care of the churches which he had formed in various parts of the country was unparalleled. Night and day, at all seasons, he was ready to fly to the call of the distressed. Persons not acquainted with him, could scarcely credit the narration, were we to recount all the instances of the self denial and privations that he underwent in the service of his neighbor. In this particular, he was no less than an astonishing man; and it was a subject of just amazement to all who witnessed his labors, that he did not sink under their continual pressure. In all this too, shone conspicuous the most unequivocal disinterestedness. In this venerable priest the church in Kentucky has lost the most active and efficient promoter of her interest. He was munificent almost beyond what can be believed; every church in the State, yes, almost every individual catholic, could show some of the gifts of the Rev. Mr. Nerinckx. But to the churches he has been singularly liberal; perhaps $20,000 would not purchase all the sacred furniture he has distributed to the churches through the country and towns. Rev. Mr. Nerinckx was also very fruitful in resources. He was poor; yet he

seemed capable of effecting every thing. He had numerous communities to maintain, yet, notwithstanding the stress of the times, he found wherewith not only to maintain those numerous establishments, but also to found and establish churches. He undertook much, and never failed to accomplish what he attempted; and when we turn our eyes to the numberless improvements which he has scattered through the country, we are at a loss to know where he obtained the means of effecting so much."

After Rev. Mr. Chabrat had been at Loretto a few months, he, by the advice of the Right Rev. Bishop Flaget, concluded to move Loretto to another place. At that time, the Bishop owned the residence and farm of Rev. Father Badin, who had gone to Europe; so he concluded to let the Sisters of Loretto have this place in exchange for St. Mary's Seminary, now St. Mary's College, and Loretto was moved from its birth-place, so dear to the sisters because of its manifold associations with their early struggles and sufferings, to St. Stephen's farm, in 1824. Unwilling to have old Loretto desecrated by indifferent men for worldly purposes, the sisters set fire to the convent and chapel, after they had removed the rest of their household to the new place, in 1825. The log-house which Father Nerinckx used to live in at St. Charles, stands there to this day, and it was, in 1874, the dwelling-house of a negro family.

Thus did the cradle of catholicity in Ken-

tucky—St. Stephen's, the residence of its first missionary priest and the palace of its first Bishop, the foundation of its first Seminary, and the headquarters of its first priests—become the permanent location of the Mother-House of the Lorettines; a fit monument to the zeal of Kentucky's greatest apostle, the crowning glory of its founder, Father Nerinckx, who had first lived on this very spot for upwards of seven years. Modern Loretto displays its spacious buildings and healthful gardens on the hill. It was from here that the zealous and energetic Father Nerinckx attended to his numerous and distant congregations; it is from here that his spiritual children spread throughout the States their powerful influence for good; it is here that the mortal remains of the holy man have found a last resting-place, and await, surrounded by those of many sisters who followed him to his eternal reward, the glorious day of the Resurrection.

CHAPTER XXXI.

The character and spirit of Father Nerinckx.

Was Father Nerinckx a rigorist?—His mortification.—His devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and the Blessed Virgin.—His discernment of vocations.—His kindness to the sick.—His unbounded confidence in Divine Providence.—His devotion to the Sacred Heart.—His humility.

The reader who has patiently followed us through the many vicissitudes of Father Nerinckx' life, can now easily form an estimate of the character and virtues of the holy missionary. The facts, as related, plainly bespeak the man; no comment of ours could place him in a stronger or more favorable light. No priest ever came to the missions of the United States, who left his impress so clear and distinct upon the people as did Father Nerinckx. His influence is plainly traceable in the catholics of Kentucky, and his spirit is still living in the Order which he founded—the Lorettines. A few additional strokes will complete the picture.

The following appreciation of the man, is by one who knew him personally for years:* "When we reflect upon the uniform tenor of his

* *Discipulus*, in the U. S. Catholic Miscellany, December 1, 1824.

life, we are at no loss to conjecture what was the firmness of his hope at the approach of death. In him, we have no doubt, the slothful and the indifferent might have witnessed what a blessed thing it is to die after a life spent in the service of God and men. They would have joined the Prophet in exclaiming: 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His Saints.'" He then recounts his many works, and continues: "His piety was as sincere as the rest of his virtues. It was of that solid, steady, and uniform kind, which bespoke him sincerely devoted to God, and entirely divested of self-seeking. All his leisure hours he spent in retirement, useful reading, and prayer. He was never known to pay a visit of mere civility—preferring rather to converse in secret with his Heavenly Father than to indulge in the pleasures of human conversation. His piety was not ostentatious, but it was easily discovered by the neatness, the order and regularity which he preserved in all the churches where he served. It was also particularly observable in the special care he took to instruct youth. He would practice a thousand modes to establish them in true and solid devotion. We shall ever remember his zeal in this particular. He was a rigid divine and an austere disciplinarian. Perhaps he was severe even to a fault. This temper of mind sometimes offended his more remiss parishioners; yet, whatever might have been the severity of his morals, we have heard but this one testimony of him,

so much to his praise: if men followed his advice, and imitated his life, they would be sure to do right. To finish his character in a word, he was such a man as every one who loves salvation, could wish to be; a friend of God and the devoted servant of mankind."

Such is the estimate of Father Nerinckx' character, made at the time of his death; and we indorse it to-day. There is, however, one point in *Discipulus*' notice, which, in justice to truth and to Father Nerinckx' character, we can not let pass unchallenged. To defend Father Nerinckx against the charge of rigorism, or of "burdening the people," by saying that they who followed his advice "would be sure to do right," is an evasion of the point, which could be used, even to defend the Pharisees against the same charge in Math. xxiii. The question is not whether people by doing more than he had a legal right to require of them, would be safe—even then a distinction would have to be made—but the question regarding him is: was he a rigorist, that is, an unjust taskmaster?

I think his defense is in the ruling practice of many schools in his day, when the spirit, and much of the practical doctrines of Jansenism were still in vogue. Father Nerinckx was rigorous to what would now be a blemish in him; but he was a holy man, who must be judged in connection with his day. Father Nerinckx partially rose above its Calvinistic tendencies. Thus, though the principle can not be defended,

the man himself can be fully excused. We must remember, moreover, that Father Nerinckx had witnessed, in all their hideousness, the awful results of neglect of christian duties, during the French Revolution. These necessarily impressed the naturally serious mind of the priest, who had suffered exile for conscience's sake, with a sense of the necessity of earnestness in the service of God, easily over-excited by the indifference of many of his people.

Father Nerinckx was austere especially to himself; we never heard of a man aiming at holiness who was not. This austerity was apparent in the body of rules which he drew up for the Society of the Friends of Mary; but they breathed the purest spirit of christian perfection; the sacred Congregation of the Propaganda had approved of them, and the Holy Father had sanctioned them. "To foster the spirit of humility and mortification, he recommended manual labor and the love of being employed in the most menial offices of the house. To encourage the sisters to practice these employments with cheerfulness and love, he pointed to the lowly life and the voluntary hardships and privations of the Blessed Savior, and to the great utility of such mortifications for the atonement of sin, and the laying up of abundant merits in heaven." * As we have said, the poverty of the Society, at its commencement, compelled hard labor; but the exposure of the sis-

* "Sketches of Kentucky."

ters to every inconvenience of weather, while laboring hard in the fields or forests, was done away with as soon as their means allowed them to employ hired help. The practice of going barefooted during a great portion of the year was too rigid for health and ill-suited to the nature of the climate, but Father Nerinckx had only allowed it at the persistent request of the fervent novices, and subsequently forbade it entirely. And that those rigid regulations were not very detrimental to the health of the sisters was fully proved by the results: Young ladies who had boarded at Old Loretto, in 1813, and joined the Society shortly after at the tender age of sixteen, were still hale and hearty, observing all the rules of the community, in 1875; and we doubt whether there is a religious society in the United States, or any class of lay-people, that can show so great a percentage of vigorous old age as the Society of the Friends of Mary, in Kentucky, possesses. The Sisters had entered into the full spirit of their state, and scrupulously followed Father Nerinckx' instructions; indeed, they would have enjoyed yet more terrible mortifications had he left matters to their own choice. But he would not suffer any instrument of penance, such as iron girdles, etc., to be used by the sisters, saying that a religious who kept the rules, and worked and taught all day, was well disciplined by night. In fact, all who knew Father Nerinckx speak,

above all things, of his uniform *kindness to others* and *severity to himself.*

His mortification was something surprising; he fasted every day of the year; his clothes were homespun, and, as a little instance of his aversion for all kind of ornaments, it is related, that, having received a new horse bridle trimmed in the prevalent style of those days, he quietly took his pocket-knife and cut off the tassels and ornamentations. "Mr. Nerinckx himself," writes Bishop Flaget,* "led an extremely austere and mortified life; his dress, his lodging, his food was poor; and he has filled his monasteries with this holy spirit. Those women seek for poverty in every thing, in their monasteries, in the plain simplicity of their chapels. The neatness, the cleanliness, the simplicity of their dwellings and of their chapels excite the wonder of their visitors. But nothing could exceed the devotion of Mr. Nerinckx to the Holy Sacrament of our altars; in this respect he was a model for every clergyman. In his churches you saw only plainness except about the altar, and his devotion led him to aim at magnificence in this place, especially as regarded the Tabernacle, which was to contain the Holy of Holies; every thing connected with the sacred mysteries called forth the exercise of this devotion. Never did he permit a day to pass without cele-

*Letter to Bishop England, in U. S. Catholic Miscellany, above quoted.

brating Mass, unless grievously ill, or engaged in a long journey; and a rule of his monasteries is to keep up, on Thursday nights, the perpetual adoration, by a succession of two sisters to two sisters, before the Blessed Sacrament, to pay their homage to the God who loved us so dearly, as, after having suffered death for us, to give us, under the sacramental veils, His flesh to eat: and to repair, in some degree, the disrespect with which this Sacrament is treated by the ingratitude of the human race."

The Bishop continues: "This good man had also great filial piety to Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and he desired to excite this affection for the Mother of our Savior in all those with whom he had any intercourse. He admired her spirit of patient love and resignation in sufferings, especially when she beheld her dearly beloved—her Creator and her Son—upon that cross, at the foot of which she was weeping. Often did the pious ejaculation, which he was in the habit of teaching to others, escape from his own lips: 'Oh! Suffering Jesus! Oh! Sorrowful Mary!' In all the churches which he attended, he established the Society of the Holy Rosary, and the Confraternity and Sisterhood of the Scapular; and almost all the catholics of his congregations, men, women, and children, are still enrolled in one or more of those pious societies.

"Nothing could be more edifying than his piety toward the dead. It is quite impossible to

pass by any of the numerous cemeteries which he has laid out without feeling deep sentiments of religion, and having a sweet sensation of deep melancholy blended with the hope of the christian. In the midst of each abode of the dead is reared the glorious emblem of the christian's faith, a large cross, surrounded by a balustrade, for the convenience of the pious friends who come to pray for their departed brethren. At the end of each grave, you also find the emblematic cross, inscribed with the dates of the birth, death, and the name of the brother or sister, whose bones are there laid up in the hope of the resurrection. One of the rules of his nuns is to go with their scholars in procession to the cemetery of the convent, and there frequently to pray for the repose of the souls of their sisters. Mr. Nerinckx obtained from the Pope considerable indulgences for those who, in his convents, offer up the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for departed souls, and the indulgence is applicable to those who assist at the Mass. He never permitted a week to pass without offering up the Mass for this great object.

"His love for retirement was such that he never paid a visit of mere ceremony. Indeed, he never visited, except when the good of his neighbor or the duty of his ministry made it obligatory on him to do so. His watchings, even during his longest and most painful journeys, were very long, and were always spent either in study or in prayer. Prayer appeared to be his

greatest and only solace in the midst of his continual labors."* "To keep up the constant practice and spirit of prayer in the houses of his Society, Mr. Nerinckx inculcated, besides regular and devout attendance at all the pious exercises of the community, distributed throughout the day, the utility of raising their hearts to God by a pious aspiration or ejaculation, whenever they would hear the clock strike, or would pass from one occupation to the other."†

Like all men of prayer, Father Nerinckx possessed a wonderful knowledge of souls and insight into their spiritual wants. His discernment of religious vocations was most remarkable. The following instances were related to us, in 1874, by the very sisters who were in 1816 under his spiritual direction: One of the scholars, only fourteen years of age, and an orphan, desired very much to become a member of the Society. After consulting with Father Nerinckx on the subject, she took the religious habit, and when of sufficient age made her final vows. Her aunt, who had been a true mother to her, was present at the latter ceremony, and, after Mass, she had an interview with her niece, embraced her, and said: "Now I am happy, my dear child; and I will tell you something that will encourage you to persevere in your religious vocation. When our venerable Father Nerinckx

* Letter of Bishop Flaget, U. S. Catholic Miscellany, above quoted.

† Sketches of Kentucky above quoted.

came to ask my consent to your taking the holy habit; I objected to it, on account of your youth. His answer was short, but overcame all my scruples: 'Madam,' he replied, 'I will go security for the child that she will never leave the Society.' I could not refuse; for it seemed God himself spoke by the mouth of the holy man. I never told you of it, for fear it might influence you; but now that you have made your final vows, rejoice, my dear child, and persevere unto the end."

Another one of the boarders, of about the same age, was equally anxious to become a religious. Unable to overcome her father's opposition, she entreated Father Nerinckx to go and intercede with him in her behalf. "It is better for you to go home," was the prudent priest's decision, "the time has not come yet, but it will come." And it did come, two years after his precious death.

Father Nerinckx was no enthusiast in the matter of religious vocations; in this, as in every thing else, he was matter of fact, and made the postulants feel that, in becoming religious, they were making a sacrifice, and choosing mortification and the cross. A little incident, which may seem puerile in the eyes of worldly readers, but which a careful student of the spirit of Father Nerinckx can not ignore, may serve as an illustration of the self-denial he required of them. The yard of Old Loretto was always kept very clean. On one occasion,

Father Nerinckx sent word by a sister to one of the postulants to go and pick up every little stick or straw that she could find from the school to his own house, on the opposite side of the yard. The pupil was diligently complying with the order, and had already gathered a handful of weeds and other rubbish, when, upon hearing a heavy step behind her, she turned her head and beheld Father Nerinckx looking her reprovingly in the eyes. "What are you doing here?" was the rather abrupt question. A meek reply was instantly rebuked by a short order to "go to school, and an expressive look which told, better than words could tell, that if she was found there again during school hours, the presumed fault would be punished with a more severe reprimand. The fact that no attempt at exculpation was made, is a practical proof of the true spirit of humility and abnegation of self which flourished in the Society in early days, and which the good sister still practices at the good old age of seventy-nine years.

But, although Father Nerinckx was prudent, and thoroughly tried the postulants, no worldly considerations could prevent him from telling the truth, when the voice of God plainly called a soul to his service. A young lady boarder of Loretto had long struggled against the conviction, which forced itself more and more upon her mind, that she was called to a religious life. The term of her studies had finally been reached, and a servant had come to take her

home to her parents. A powerful struggle between nature and grace now ensued. God's own grace, it is true, was on the one hand; but on the other, the world with all its glittering allurements; the world, in which her position and talents would secure for her the admiration of her friends, where the love of a dear mother, who invited her home, awaited her. Should she say farewell to all these, to bury herself, her youth and all her attainments, within the convent walls, where no admiring eye, no flattering tongue would appreciate her gifts? The conflict was hard, and she was going to take the fatal leap into the world, when a good inspiration came to her: she would go to Father Nerinckx and acquaint him with her struggles. No sooner had she entered his room, than the priest spoke in a decided tone: "You have a vocation to a religious life, and you are about to lose it. You are free, my child, to go home or stay. Our Lord offers you the chance to be His now; if you accept, it will be yours forever; if you go home, you will never return; your vocation will be taken from you, and given to one who will be more faithful to receive it. You will then be left with only sufficient grace to save your soul. But will you save it? Now then, do as you please." "Father," she replied, "I stay; please write to mother, and inform her of my resolution." From that moment, her heart was as relieved of a great weight. In due time, she received the religious

habit, and, up to the day of this writing, when she is still alive, no happier soul is to be found within convent walls.

One more instance of Father Nerinckx', we might almost say, supernatural intuition: a young lady convert went to Loretto to school, and soon became very unhappy. She had a perfect dread of becoming a nun, and left the convent lest she should acquire an inclination for the religious state. But her unhappiness only increased at her return into the world, and she came back. Unable to conquer her fears, she finally determined to have an interview with the spiritual director on the subject, in the hope of obtaining some relief. She told him all, and was not a little surprised when Father Nerinckx simply directed her to go to the chapel and say a little prayer. "But, Father, I can't, I won't be a nun!" she exclaimed. "Never mind, my child," replied the priest in a quiet tone, "just go to church; prayer will do you no harm." She went, and scarcely had she knelt down, when all her troubles vanished. Some months later, she begged to be received as a member of the community; she became a most exemplary sister, and years after ended her virtuous life by a most edifying death.

Although always austere in his manners, and mortified in his way of living, and requiring the sisters to practice the virtue of mortification in an eminent degree, Father Nerinckx had a peculiar tenderness for the sick. Nothing was too

good for them, and the sisters were ordered to treat them with extraordinary care and attention. He visited the infirmary every day himself, and would carry to the sufferers wine, which was otherwise never used but for altar purposes, and have the sisters supply them with all the delicacies which poor Loretto could afford. On one occasion a postulant was prostrated with a very high fever, and obliged to remain in the infirmary. Father Nerinckx came to pay her a visit, and inquired of her, whether she did not desire to go home. Upon her answering in the negative, he looked around, and spying some dry corn-bread on a tin plate, asked the sick child whether that was all they gave her to eat. She replied that she desired nothing, and Father Nerinckx retired. The same afternoon a wagon arrived at Calvary, and she who was infirmarian of Loretto stepped out, and brought the superior's orders for another sister to start at once for Loretto. In a few moments, the one summoned took her place in the wagon, and was, before night, installed at the bedside of the sick postulant, to whom she proved a most tender and skillful nurse. The sister thus sent to Calvary, and who was so exemplary a member of the community that she never received the least admonition, related the incident herself some twenty years after its occurrence.

Father Nerinckx was a great lover of poverty, and always had the sisters put an old patch in a

conspicuous place of their new dress. However, he liked cleanliness, and rigorously enforced it upon all. A novice who was considered to be a little vain had been made to wear an old dress for a considerable length of time. One day, Father Nerinckx noticed the neglect of her apparel, and told her to request the Mistress of Novices to call on him. A few moments later, she was requested by the latter to go and change the worn-out garment for a new one, which she would find in her cell. In due time the mistress took the tattered habit to Father Nerinckx, who bade her throw it into the fire, remarking that austerity and poverty were very commendable virtues, but that cleanliness was an essential one.

We have already spoken of his unbounded confidence in Divine Providence, and of his favorite maxim which he had always on his lips, and which is engraven upon his tomb: "Do not forsake Providence and He will never forsake you!" That the sisters were in that respect faithful followers of their founder, and partakers of his spirit, is amply proved by what Sister Eulalia relates as having happened in 1818. It need not be repeated that the beginnings were everywhere very poor at the date 1818. At Calvary, especially, the sisters labored under many privations during the first months of their residence. One morning, after a very meager breakfast, at which they had consumed almost the last provisions in the house, Mr. Vin-

cent Gates* was sent into the neighborhood to buy, beg, or borrow some meat and other victuals for dinner. Meanwhile good Sister Reyneldis Hayden, going to the river, which was near by, and having to pass through a little cane-brake that had not yet been cleared up, saw a fawn which was intently looking at her. Fixing her eyes on those of the animal, she walked up to it, and, throwing her mantle over its head, led it unresistingly to the slaughter. So the sisters had a good dinner, and their trust in the protection of Providence was considerably increased.

But above all things, and *that* will endear Father Nerinckx' memory to many a reader, the holy man had a most tender love for the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He invariably ended all his instructions with a recommendation of the devotion to the Sacred Heart. His sisters, to this day, wear the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary embroidered in red silk on the corners of their black veils, resting upon their heart, and are recommended by their founder to kiss them often through the day. In fact, the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus was made the Standard and the Daily Food of the Society of the Friends of Mary at the Foot of the Cross. In 1816, while in Belgium, Father Nerinckx had a wood-cut made and several hundred

*This was an elderly gentleman who had devoted his life to serve the Sisters of Loretto, and who died most edifyingly at Loretto Convent in the latter part of August, 1833.

copies of it printed, representing the *Suffering Jesus* on the Cross, almost completely hidden by a huge *Flaming Heart.* In the gaping wound of the Divine Heart, the pierced heart of the Sorrowful Mary is hidden, and surrounded by smaller ones representing the number of professed sisters, while other similar hearts are seen leaving the earth to seek a refuge in that wound of love, typifying the novices and postulants. On the rock which forms the base of the Cross, waves the *Standard* of the Society: "O Suffering Jesus! O Sorrowful Mary!" and a facsimile of Old Loretto Convent is seen to the right, in the background. One of these Father Nerinckx had framed with a glass on both sides, the reverse bearing the following inscription in his own handwriting:

THE MANNA, OR
MORNING FOOD
OF THE
SOCIETY.

*Sacerdos paratus ad Missam conversus que ad assistentes legit sequentem exhortatiunculam.**

O Dear Sisters and Scholars!

Love your Jesus, dying with love for you on the Cross! Love Mary, your loving Mother, sorrowing at the Foot of the Cross! Love one another, have only one heart, one soul, one

*The priest, being ready for Mass, turns toward those present and reads the following little exhortation.

mind! Love the Institute, love the rules, love Jesus' darling humility!

*His dictis, Superior advenit et senior Scholaris et genuflexae osculantur S. S. Corda, et mox incipitur Missa. Semper commendantur: memoria benefactorum, praesertim Flandrorum. Memoria Pii VII. et Ben. Jos. primi Bard. Epi. sub quibus Institutum coepit, et a quibus protectum stat et propagatur.**

1818.

How sweetly blended with the main devotion of his foundation—the Sufferings of Jesus and Mary!

Much more could be said about the virtues and holy practices of the venerable missionary, but we must content ourselves with the following extract from his own writings. Saved from destruction, because copied before his manuscripts were consigned to the fire, it will show the man as he was, mortified, and, above all, possessing, in a supereminent degree, the great virtue of *humility*—the foundation of sanctity, the cornerstone of the whole fabric of christian perfection.

*This being said, the Superior and the oldest scholar come up, and kneeling down, kiss the S. S. Hearts; then begins the Mass. The remembrance should ever be made of the benefactors, especially those of Flanders, of Pius VII., and of Benedict Joseph, first Bishop of Bardstown, under both of whom the Institute began, and by whom it is to-day protected and extended.

THE WRITER'S OPINION, SHOULD HE BE A CONFESSOR OF NUNS, FROM WHICH HIS WANT OF TALENTS FREES HIM.

"The writer's opinion is, that there is no part of the flock that requires a more apt, or a more accomplished confessor than a community of nuns. If their call, according to the Holy Fathers, be more eminent than any other, their lives ought to be more holy, and hence their guides better qualified than the average of priests. It is really a mistake, that has been observed in nearly all catholic countries, that religious can be easily led by men of common capacity and talents, sometimes worn out with age and labor.

"Indeed, this is a mistake, and a very pernicious one. I do not wonder if some ascribe, in a great measure, to this blunder, the general downfall of religious orders in Europe in these days. The weak and ignorant laborer lets the cockle grow, and is not able to prevent its growth in these beautiful gardens of the Church of God; and by this same want of skill, these castles and fortresses of religion become the prey of our enemies. Scandals burst out as torrents, and sweep every thing before them; and the armies of the reserve being defeated, our enemies have nothing more to fear. The Sophists of the present day are very well apprised of this truth, and if the sins crying to heaven for vengeance are not common here, we can not

say the same of the sins of ignorance in the very mysteries of religion.

"Our little army of Loretto, will, I think, give constant employment to and tax the energy and zeal of the best informed of confessors. It is a great task: Christian duties, rules and spirit of the Institute, christian perfection, extensive dominion of vice and passions, corruption of the heart, artifices of the devil, policy of the world, visits of numerous kindred, subsistence of the houses, temporal concerns, schools, domestics and servants, and many other points too numerous to mention, will offer him a very serious battle, and that on a very slippery ground.

"Had I the necessary talents, together with a lawful mission, I would wish to act after the following rules:

"1. I would keep up a regular course of studies. The Ascetics and Mystics would take up part of my time. Catechisms, exhortations, sermons, retreats, etc., would not leave much time to slumber. The very study and meditation of the rules, etc., kept the holy ones busy for centuries to accomplish the edifice of christian perfection.

2. For this purpose, I would divide my day's work, beginning half an hour before the community of the sisters, that is, at three or half past three A. M., and finishing at ten P. M.; giving four hours to study, meditation of rules, etc.; office, celebration of Mass, and private de-

votions might take five hours; visits of schools and temporal concerns taking up the balance of the time.

"3. I would endeavor to bring my practice in the confessional and my exhortations to the community to the mode of Father Barry, not losing the precious time, as St. Ignatius says, in trying to satisfy minds which are sure never to be satisfied. (Father Nerinckx' meaning is that he would merely insist upon compliance with the rules and blind obedience in direction, without trying to give for every thing the reason why, for the satisfaction of the more learned.) It may be observed that this class of penitents are not the most faithful observers of the rules.

"4. I would allow none to call on me without a real necessity, a short while, and in due time with all necessary precautions.

"5. I would receive none of their services, but those that can not possibly be avoided. Hours should be appointed, out of which no audience.

"6. My clothes would be as much as possible homespun, and made as full, plain, and canonical as can be done; the gown, or *toga talaris*, with the Summer habit of 600 cotton. I should hate to preach poverty and see so many orphans suffering and naked, while I would wear the dress of the gentry. A priest has more right to look like an Apostle than like a gentleman. A St. Francis Xavier has tried it, and St. James wore a habit of linen. The relics we have of

the habits and linen of the saint and apostolic men show what stuff they were made of. We are ministers of the same God, preachers of the same Gospel; in need of more penance, mortification, and self-denial; still, aiming at the same heavenly reward.

"7. For the same reasons, I would be as particular about my food, which I would regulate in the following manner: no breakfast in the morning; at dinner, one dish of meat, with a plate of vegetables and corn-bread. Since my severe spell of sickness, my old age and many complaints seem to call for a warm drink, as tea, etc., but this should be weak and without sweets. At night, bread and butter, if it can be had. Never would I partake of puddings, cakes, preserves, etc., wines, liquors, or cider. This last was the wish and practice of Bishop Flaget whilst at Loretto.

"8. I would never pay any visits; nor would I receive any but such as hospitality would command. Loss of time, scandals, or little edification, I have often seen to be the consequence of visitors in Europe. I know not one convert, made by the habit of visiting, in America; and I also know that non-visitors make fully as many proselytes if not more than the others.

"9. Special exertions should be made to comply as much as possible with the Rules of the Society, not to let the weak female disciples

outdo the strong and perfect master, which the confessor ought to be.

"It appears then, that confessors of this cast would be very scarce, and could not well be found but in an institute of males of a similar description. He who presides over the keeping of the rules, should be the first observer of them. The writer feels ashamed of his own cowardice. The necessity of such an institute is an absolute one for the preservation of the Society as it exists now.* It is impossible to keep up the spirit of the Society, if the members of it are under the direction of isolated priests, not regulars, who, as they differ greatly in practice, need differ as much in theory, whilst a fixed theory may be called the 'Spirit of the Society.'"

"*Note.* What is here said, was written March 4, 1820, a little while before I went to Europe on business, from whence I returned in November, 1821. During that time the Society suffered much, and was not a little exposed; what I insinuated in No. 9 above, remains then unquestionably true."

*We may infer from this passage what Rev. Nerinckx had in view in establishing a brotherhood. First, of course, the education of males, but also the direction of his sisterhood. In time, the Society would have obtained some subjects called to and qualified for the priesthood, who would have acted as directors of both branches of the Institute.

CHAPTER XXXII.

1824–1847.

The Loretto Society.—Apple Creek, Perry county, Mo., etc.—Cape Girardeau, Mo.—Father Nerinckx' library.—Cedar Grove, Louisville, Ky.—Mission among the Osage Indians in 1847.—Interesting account of their customs.

We will now cast a rapid glance over the subsequent history of the Loretto Society.

At Father Nerinckx' death one hundred and twenty-one sisters had joined the Society, of whom eighteen had died. Mother Juliana remained at the Barrens, Perry county, Mo., and Mother Isabella Clarke became Dear Mother. Father Chabrat was continued ecclesiastical superior of Loretto until 1834, when he became Coadjutor Bishop of Bardstown. Under his administration the new chapel was dedicated in 1826, but no new foundations were made in Kentucky by the Mother-House. Sister Sabina O'Brien succeeded Sister Isabella as Dear Mother that same year, and remained in office until 1832, when Mother Josephine Kelly, of Missouri, was elected to fill her place.

Some attempts at colonization were made by the *Bethlehem* foundation of Perry county, but

they were not permanent; perhaps, owing to the fact that, in the mind of Father Nerinckx, its founder, the Loretto Society's aim is not so much the establishment of parochial schools, as self-supporting houses, such as academies, orphan asylums, and preparatory schools for first communicants. St. Joseph's parochial school, *Apple Creek*, Perry county, Mo., was the first foundation of the kind, attempted in 1831, Sister Eulalia Kelly, Superior. This place had been given to the sisters by a good old German catholic, Mr. Snowbusch, but it was no situation for a school. These sisters, three in number, were moved to St. Mary's, *New Madrid*, in the same State, November 2, 1832; they struggled for over six years against fever and sickness, and were finally recalled to Bethlehem, June 24, 1837.

Sister Benedicta Fenwick was sent, in October, 1832, with five other sisters, to open a school at St. Michael's, *Fredericktown*, Mo.; they returned home in April, 1836.

A flourishing house, called Our Lady of Mount Carmel, was established by Sister Agnes Hart and seven others, at *Ste. Genevieve*, Mo., (where Father Nerinckx had died thirteen years previous,) June 24, 1837. It was suppressed in August, 1858.

Rev. Walter Coomes succeeded Bishop Chabrat as Ecclesiastical Superior in 1834, but the increasing wants of the catholics soon required his active co-operation on the mission, and from

1835 till 1846, all authority was centered in the Dear Mother, under the immediate jurisdiction of Bishop Chabrat.

Sister Isabella Clarke was re-elected Dear Mother in 1838, and under her administration the Society began to get over financial embarrassments, which had been a serious obstacle to its progress. The sisters were invited to St. Mary's, near *Pine Bluffs*, Arkansas, the same year, and sister Agnes Hart, with two others, were sent there, the 11th of October, 1838. Mr. Crede Taylor, Francis Vangine, and some other good catholics gave them a small strip of land with some log and two frame buildings. St. Joseph's, *Little Rock*, was established from this house, January 14, 1841, Sister Alodia Vessels, Superior. She and the two other sisters were recalled to Loretto, Ky., April 24, 1845. The Sisters of St. Mary's, near Pine Bluffs, were moved to St. Ambrose, *Post Arkansas*, in August, 1842, and recalled home to Loretto in May, 1845.

Bethlehem, Perry county, Mo., was moved to St. Vincent's, *Cape Girardeau*, in the same State, where a convent and academy were established in November, 1838, and put under the direction of Mother Benedicta Fenwick and seven sisters. This institution flourishes to this day.

In 1839, Right Rev. Bishop Flaget brought with him, from Europe, three French ladies, two of whom were candidates for the Loretto

Society. Money being a very scarce article at Loretto in those days, he arranged with Bishop Chabrat to pay their traveling expenses with a portion of Father Nerinckx' books. Mother Isabella objected, that, by the express terms of the founder's last will, the library was to remain at Loretto for the use of the priest who had charge of the Society. But, considering the little use to Loretto of that very select collection of ecclesiastical authors, and the great benefit which the seminarians would derive from such a valuable acquisition, the director quieted her scruples, and carried away most of the books over to the Seminary in 1841. The remainder were taken away under Bishop Spalding.

Bishop Flaget also entertained a great desire of possessing an institution for the education of the deaf and dumb, and having on hand a donation of several hundred dollars which he could apply to a charitable purpose of his own selection, he induced the Loretto Sisters to try the experiment; accordingly, three children were admitted in 1840. But Bishop Chabrat strongly urged upon the prelate the claims of the Seminary, which was in great need of assistance, and the intended means of support having thus been withdraw from the establishment, the attempt failed.

The Cedar Grove property, Portland, Ky., now better known as *Mount St. Benedict*, near *Louisville*, was bought in the Spring of 1842, by Bishop Chabrat for $1,200, and the sis-

ters founded the now flourishing academy on the 16th of August, of the same year. The place was deeded by Bishop Spalding to the Loretto Sisters in 1856, the consideration being $4,000.

Dear Mother Generose Mattingly was appointed as successor to Sister Isabella in 1842; and Mother Berlindis Downs, whom the Bishop had named to succeed her in 1843, was elected Dear Mother by the community in 1849, after she had already acted as such for two terms.

Under her administration, and by the advice of Rev. Father David A. Deparcq, who had been appointed ecclesiastical superior in 1846, four Loretto Sisters were directed to leave Ste. Genevieve, Mo., on the 9th of September, 1847, under the escort of Rev. J. Schoenmakers, S. J., to open a manual labor school among the female portion of the *Osage Indians*.

This mission had been for several years in the hands of the Presbyterians, who, convinced that their Calvinistic teachings would remain barren among the Indians, abandoned it in 1845. In the course of the same year, Major Harvey, Superintendent of the Indian tribes, having assembled in council the several tribes of the Osage nation, exposed to them, in the liveliest colors, the great advantages of a good education, adding that their Great Father, the President, would send them missionaries to instruct their children, if they so desired. One of the chiefs replied that the only missionaries they wished

for, were the *Black-gowns* who had visited them many years ago. In fact, Rev. Father De Lacroix had visited the Osages in 1820, and Father Van Quickenborne, S. J., as well as Rev. Mr. Lutz, were among them several years later. The Superintendent, a just and liberal man, communicated the Indian's reply to the government, supporting their demand as a just and beneficial one. In pursuance of his advice the President requested the Superiors of the Society of Jesus to take charge of the mission, and they accepted.

In the Autumn of 1846, the Rev. Father Schoenmakers went to examine the state of affairs at the mission situated on the Neosho river, a tributary of the Arkansas, forty miles from Fort Scott, and one hundred and thirty miles from Westport, a frontier town of the State of Missouri. He came back to St. Louis in mid-Winter; and left definitely for that mission, the 7th of April, 1847, accompanied by Father J. J. Bax, S. J., and three coadjutor brothers. To the great surprise and delight of the Indians, who had mourned Father Schoenmakers' departure and his prolonged absence with little hope for his return, the missionaries arrived at Osage Mission, the 28th of the same month, and a school was opened on the 10th of May. Before the close of the year 1847, the council had to petition their Great Father to enlarge the houses of the mission, so well was

the school attended, and the government acceded to this request.

The chiefs soon manifested an ardent desire to enjoy the same educational blessings for their daughters. Father Schoenmakers resolved to interest a generous and fervent community of nuns in the education of the Osage girls. With this intention, he went to St. Louis, but he knocked in vain at the door of several convents of that city; the enterprise frightened every one.* At length, he addressed himself to the Sisters of Loretto, Kentucky; and, remembering the last wishes of their generous founder, the Superiors eagerly accepted the offer.

After remaining about ten days in St. Louis, making preparations for their long trip, and purchasing clothing and other necessary articles for the Indian children who were to be placed under their care, the sisters embarked on the steamer *J. J. Hardon* about the 20th of September, 1847, and, after many delays on the sandbars of the Missouri, they reached *Kansas City*, at that period, the western end of civilization. A few straggling log or frame houses were, at that time, dignified by that name; but the sisters found there the kindliest hospitality at the house of Mrs. Chouteau, the leading lady of the place, a good catholic and a real mother to

*Cfr. "Western Missions and Missionaries," by Father Desmet, pg. 350, sqq.

priests and religious. As the good sisters had never traveled away from civilization, they knew very little of the difficulties often encountered in crossing the vast prairies of the West, and of the dangers attending camping-out at night. Mrs. Chouteau proved her maternal kindness to them, by preparing every thing necessary for their tedious journey of one hundred and fifty miles.

Rev. Schoenmakers hired a two-horse wagon, and, on the 2d of October, 1847, the little caravan, consisting of the Jesuit Father, Mr. Jarboe, Mother Concordia, and Sisters Bridget, Mary, and Vincentia, started for the Osage Mission. Nothing unusual occurred during their first day's journey to mar the happy cheerfulness of our missionaries; but when night came, the sisters wondered not a little to see nothing before them but the immense waste of prairie and the sky above. However, under the guidance of the priest, they pushed bravely on, and they soon perceived in the distance the hoped for shelter, a little building which would hardly accommodate the party, the only house between Kansas City and the mission. But they soon found out that they had been forestalled; the building was crowded; nothing daunted, the sisters alighted, and, having spread a cloth on the grass, they had reason to be thankful for the kind forethought of Madame Chouteau, and did honor to the excellent provisions she had given them. After night prayers, Father Schoenmakers

and Mr. Jarboe were soon snugly ensconced under their blankets on the grass, whilst the sisters reclined as best they could on some clothing which had been spread in the wagon for their night's rest. Morning dawned at last, and was thankfully welcomed by the poor sisters, little accustomed to such open air sleeping quarters. Sister Vincentia soon bestirred herself making coffee over a blazing fire, and they all partook with much zest of the scanty breakfast, not a little amused at the novelty of their situation, and, in Indian fashion, they sat upon the grass.

The journey was now resumed, and the morning hours passed swiftly by, as our travelers spent most of them in devotions, whilst their thoughts reverted to the sisters at home, who had the happiness of assisting at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on this bright Sunday morning. At noon, they reached a spot called Cool Water Grove; here they met some peaceable Miami Indians, the chief of whom spoke English enough to make himself understood. Father Schoenmakers and the sisters visited his tent, and were delighted to learn that his children had been educated by sisters in Tennessee. After a short rest they proceeded on their journey, and, at night, reached a trading-post where they were kindly received; however, the Indian saddles, trunks, and pelts, which filled the place, emitted a most insupportable odor which rendered their stay there any thing but agreeable. Nothing but the welcome sight of a gentleman

on horseback, the only white man they had seen since leaving Kansas City, relieved the tediousness of their third day's journey; and they encamped near the Osage lands. This was truly a night of horrors for the poor sisters; the appalling stillness of the boundless prairie was only broken by the wild howls of the prairie wolves, and the darkness of the night only served to increase their terror. Left to themselves in a wild country, far from all human aid, they fervently invoked that Divine Providence which Father Nerinckx had taught them to rely upon with such unbounded confidence, and their fears soon subsided; they felt that they were under the powerful protection of Him, for whom they had sacrificed every earthly gratification.

About noon of the fourth day, they reached Mr. Papin's trading-post, ten miles from the Missouri; here, men, women, and children had assembled to meet Father Schoenmakers and his little band. "At first sight," writes one of the sisters, "these Indians seem more like spirits of the lower regions than human beings; the grandees among them are more frightful in appearance than the common class. The latter are filthy and almost without covering; the former are painted red, black, green, and yellow; their heads are adorned with eagle claws, shells, heads of birds, and feathers of various kinds."

In the afternoon, our party left the post, and proceeded to their mission home, the wagon be-

ing followed by some fifty boys in a state of complete nudity. Father Bax, S. J., accompanied by a dozen little boys, came to greet our travelers at their arrival. The good sisters were immediately introduced into their new home, made of hewed logs, two stories high. They became at once the one object of the curiosity of the inquisitive Indians, who would go every little while and look at them through the numerous crevices with which the ill-constructed house abounded. A few split saplings roughly set on four round sticks to imitate benches, were the only furniture of the place; a bench, made by Mr. Jarboe out of a piece of rough board, and long enough to accommodate the four sisters, proved quite a commodious seat to the poverty-loving Friends of Mary.

On the 10th of October, the sisters opened the school with four pupils, three half-breeds and one Osage. In a few months the school counted eighty children, who, thanks to the indefatigable zeal of their teachers, soon became quite proficient in reading, writing, elementary arithmetic, grammar, and geography, and had acquired some knowledge of drawing, painting, and all kinds of needle-work. Some learned music with great success, for the Osages are fond of singing; and it was edifying to the missionaries, and a great gratification to the Indian parents, to hear the dear children sing hymns and canticles during divine service on Sundays and festivals. This success, of course, was not

reached without much trouble to the sisters, but here, like everywhere else, they proved true children of Loretto, faithful to the spirit of their holy founder. Says Father Bax, S. J.:* "Their sufferings, their trials, and their privations were very great. They were obliged to sleep in the open air. That did not hinder two other sisters from coming to join them a little after in their heroic enterprise. Their patience, their kindness, their courage and their perseverance, have gained the esteem, affection, and love of every one. They are succeeding; they have already produced a considerable change, and are doing great good. The talents displayed in the direction of their school, and the rapid progress of the children are admired by all the strangers who visit this community."

The school being a manual labor establishment, the girls learned to cook, wash, iron, bake, sew, knit, etc., and their industry soon procured for the boys pants, vests, and other garments, to replace the little ragged blanket which formerly was their only scanty attire. Bead, shell, and other fancy work proved a favorite occupation to the Indian maidens, who have a wonderful taste for such ornaments that gratify their unsophisticated vanity. They considered it a great privilege to work for the altar, and made laces, albs, vestments, etc.; later on, when other churches were built in the neighbor-

* In "Western Missions and Missionaries," by Father Desmet, pg. 360.

ing missions, the children delighted in furnishing them with all the necessary ornaments.

As the Indian children were not used to confinement, in fact, quite averse to it, the missionaries were obliged to give them many recreations. On those days, they wandered through the woods, gathering nuts and wild grapes, or disported themselves in the clear waters of the beautiful Neosho, for Indian papooses take to the water like ducks. However, when the elders were absent on a hunting expedition, which happened twice a year, the girls, naturally timid, were afraid to ramble in the forest, and kept close to their guardian angels' side.

"After the ground was plowed, and corn and wheat sowed by the squaws, who do all the heavy work, the whole tribe started for the buffalo hunt. Not a being was left behind, the children being left to be cared for by brothers and sisters under the supervision of Father Schoenmakers, who, like a good shepherd, generously provided for his numerous flock (like the primitive christians, we have all things in common). The sick ones were stretched on a pony, a pack on each side of the animal preventing their falling off. On their return, the corn was ripe and undisturbed, though no fences were made to secure it. This precaution was unnecessary; the Indians keep no other animals but horses and dogs, and although they have them in great numbers, they take them all with them to the hunt.

"The Indian is at home in any part of the prairie; the women, in a few hours, make excellent tents. The men shoot and kill the game; the women attend to the drying of the meat; this is done by a fire made of buffalo *chips*, as they call them, no wood being obtainable for miles around. The Indians are very fond of that meat, and on their return from the hunt, they bring their children some packs of it; the little ones rejoice over this as much as white children do over candy. Occasionally, some Indian offered a buffalo tongue to the sisters; in presenting the gift, he would say: 'I thought of you, way yonder!' This was one of their best turned compliments. Before going to the hunt, they always brought to the sisters their most valuable objects to keep for them. One of them once opened his trunk on his return, to see whether all was right within; to the horror of the poor sisters, he displayed a handful of scalps at which he looked with much complacency, shaking the long hair, whilst his eyes sparkled with delight. These were his treasures!

"When a respectable person among them dies, his friends kill a horse on the grave of the deceased, while a party of warriors go in search of an enemy whom they kill and scalp. They then imagine the dear departed happy in his new hunting-grounds, as he has a horse to ride on and a servant to wait on him.

"One of the boys was taken sick at the mis-

sion. His father had him removed to his tent; the consequence was, the poor boy took cold, and died. The Indian was sorely perplexed, not knowing what to do with him; he consulted a friend: 'My boy,' said he, 'loved the white men, yet, he belongs to the tribe; to whom shall I send him?' The friend advised him to send him to the Black-gown; accordingly, he was brought back to the mission, dressed and buried according to our customs. This was what they called giving him over to the white men. The Osages seldom put their dead under the ground. They place them in a sitting posture, clothed in a buffalo robe, a fan in the hand, beads of various colors about the neck, and near them various trinkets, even coffee and sugar.

"The manner of mourning among the Indians is quite singular. The women cut and disfigure their hair, which is naturally beautiful, and put a large patch of mud on the right side of the head. They do not eat, as long as that symbol of grief is there. However, if they are invited to eat by various persons whom they respect, they show their deference by calling for water and washing off the mud; they then comply with the desire of their friends. But it must be remembered that this is a very high mark of esteem. Once a woman brought a little girl to the mission; Sister Bridget gave the child a good bathing, dressed her, and cut her hair, trimming it nicely, so as to give the little one a better appearance. The mother having come

in, immediately raised the Indian whoop, and exclaimed: 'Alas! a stranger has done what thy mother should have done herself; thy mother should have made thee mourn for thy dead father.' The mourning of the men is somewhat different: they let the hair grow very long, they disfigure their faces with mud and white clay, then go day after day to the grave of the dear departed, where they sing, or rather howl, most pitifully.

"The Osages require great attention from their relatives in time of sickness. To uncles and aunts they give the title of *little fathers* and *mothers*; and, if one of them fails to visit a sick child, the other relatives hack their heads like mince-meat. When a child died at the mission, the parents required payment from the fathers and sisters, which they usually paid in blankets, calico, or such like things. The sisters had a little girl, a daughter of Red Eagle, who, after a lingering sickness of some months, died. Red Eagle was so enraged, that he went to the mission with the avowed purpose of *whipping the sisters!* Father Schoenmakers sent Sam. Bevenan, an Indian, to remain in the sisters' house, and prevent the chief from effecting his purpose. It is doubtful whether Sam. would have succeeded; but, fortunately, an Indian woman, named Gray Heels, happened to be in the house when Red Eagle came, and she told him, in the Osage tongue, that the sisters had been very good toward his child, and *had given her plenty of*

water. It is an Indian notion, that, in sickness, water is the most efficient remedy. This pacified the fellow; he left, not, however, without his pay, namely, a blanket and about ten yards of calico!

"If one Indian, in a quarrel, kill another, (a case seldom met with,) the murderer has to pay for that death with all his horses and whatsoever else belongs to him; these are distributed amongst the relatives of the murdered man.

"The Osages have many faults; they are sensitive and jealous; but they have a catholic heart. No missionaries belonging to other denominations have ever succeeded in gaining them to their opinions. The fathers and sisters always found them ready to learn their prayers and catechism. On the first Christmas of 1847, only two, besides the religious, went to holy Communion; but on the Christmas of 1848, several boys and girls made their first Communion. Many of the children had been baptized by some traveling missionary, a few years previous; they kept the picture which the priest had given them, as a record of their baptism. But it has been a source of real sorrow to the good missionaries and sisters, to have effected so little permanent good among them, notwithstanding their energetic efforts, and their self-devotion; however, they have the consolation of having baptized thousands of infants, who are now glorifying their Creator in heaven.

"Mother Concordia, and after her, Mother

Bridget, well understood the sublimity of their holy mission; and under their kind maternal sway, the sisters faithfully followed their example. Oh! that I could describe the trouble, the anxiety, they suffered for those poor children, most of them covered with most disgusting sores! With what tenderness they washed and dressed those ulcers, so revolting to nature. They had imbibed the beautiful maxim of their holy founder: "*Gain souls, buy souls, at whatever cost;*" many a one was purchased for a few yards of calico. This bribe did not prove sufficient in the case of an old woman whose sickly child the sisters were most anxious to baptize; but the tempting offer of some fruit made her yield at last. The little one was baptized, and named Joseph, and shortly after, God, in his mercy, took the dear little soul to himself. There are few children raised among the Indians, most of them die young. Of the great number of families who were in and about the Osage mission, the sisters knew but two women who raised four children to maturity; and of all the girls who were raised at the mission during the first fifteen years, and who afterward married, not ten are living now." *

After the treaty of 1866, with the government, the poor Osage Indians reluctantly left their beautiful lands of the Neosho, and their dear Mission Home, to remove further West. A new mission was formed by the government, and, against all

* Narrative by one of the sisters, 1874.

equity and justice, given to the Quakers, notwithstanding the energetic protest of the Osages. The Osage mission town, settled by whites, soon replaced the Indian tent, and is built on the site of the Indians' burying-ground; to procure for the white children the advantages of education, of which the unfortunate Indian progeny had been deprived, the Sisters of Loretto soon laid the foundation of a fine stone building, which was completed in three years, at a cost of $25,000. The new establishment is called St. Ann's Academy, the first of the kind founded in Southern Kansas; and one hundred acres of land surrounding it have been deeded to the sisters. Thanks to catholic enterprise and zeal, the children of the Kansas pioneer enjoy all the blessings of a truly christian education.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

1847–1876.

Florissant, Mo.—"Our Lady of Light," New Mexico.—Burning of Loretto Convent, Ky.—Cairo, Ill.—Death of Father D. Deparcq.—Denver, Colorado.—Other foundations.

The Lord continued to bless the administration of Mother Berlindis Downs, and the Little Loretto Society grew every day in usefulness.

At the request of Rev. Van Assche, S. J., pastor of the church of St. Ferdinand, Florissant, Mo., who met Rev. D. A. Deparcq, Ecclesiastical Superior of the Lorettines, at St. Louis University, a colony of six sisters was sent to that beautiful little French village, situated about sixteen miles west of St. Louis, in the Spring of 1847. The sisters appointed for this mission were; Mother Eleonora Clarke, superior, Sister Philomena, directress of studies, and Sisters Theodosia, Vincentia, Ambrosia, and Stanislaus, assistants. They arrived in St. Louis on the 21st of June, and were kindly received by the Sisters of Charity in that city. The evening of the same day they went out to Florissant, the Sisters of Charity accompanying them

to the village. The sisters took possession of a two-story brick building and some dilapidated old cabins, formerly occupied by the Ladies of the Sacred Heart,* which, together with some three acres of land, they rented on trial for one year for the sum of $200.

The first year was one of great poverty and suffering. The day school, which had been immediately opened, brought but an insignificant income, and, at the end of the scholastic year, there were only fifteen boarders in the academy. The future wore such a gloomy aspect, that the superior had determined to return to Kentucky, when Father Van Assche negotiated with the Ladies of the Sacred Heart for the purchase of the property, and had the buildings and five acres of land conveyed to the Lorettines for the

*A colony of the Sacred Heart Ladies, with Madame Duchesne as superior, sailed from Royan, France, for the United States, on March 21, 1818. They came at the request of Mgr. Dubourg, who returned to Louisiana in the preceding year. Madame Duchesne and her four companions landed at New Orleans, May 29th; after spending some months with the Ursuline Sisters of that city, they departed for St. Louis, Missouri, which they reached, August 22d; and, about the beginning of September, 1818, they took up their residence at St. Charles, on the banks of the Missouri river, twenty miles west of St. Louis. On September 9th of the following year, 1819, they were compelled to abandon St. Charles, in order to avoid starvation. The ladies remained in St. Louis till December following, and then took possession of their new home adjoining the new brick church at Florissant, on Christmas eve, 1819. They retained the house of Florissant, and used it as their novitiate, till the Spring of 1847, when the novitiate was transferred to Grand Coteau, Louisiana. The ladies reopened their house at St. Charles in the Autumn of 1828, and they are still there.

sum of $1,000. The kind ladies remitted the two hundred dollars for the first year's rent—a liberal dônation to the struggling community, and one duly appreciated by its members.*

The sisters now set to work with renewed energy. All were actively employed in various kinds of manual labor; and not only during the first year, but for several succeeding ones, did poor Mother Eleonora and her little community spend many a recreation hour shelling corn, till their hands were bleeding, in order to be able to furnish the community with the daily bread.

The kindness of Mrs. Jane Chambers, and family, of Florissant, and Mrs. Tijghe, of St. Louis, during the years 1847–48 will never be forgotten. Judge Mullanphy paid the sisters a friendly visit, and, by way of encouragement, handed them a check for $50; he promised, moreover, that, should the sisters persevere in their zealous labors at Florissant, he would lighten the burden of their pecuniary embarrassments, a promise he was destined never to fulfill, as an almost sudden death soon after, put an end to his pious designs.

However, Mother Eleonora put her trust in Providence, and bravely met the difficulties that beset her on all sides; nor was her confidence disappointed: the darkest hour before the dawn, had passed away, and the academy soon entered upon the prosperous career which makes Floris-

*Cfr. "Life of Mother Barat," by Rev. Baunard, Vol. 1, Chap. xiii., xiv., xx., and Vol. 2. Chap., xii.

sant one of the finest educational establishments of Missouri. Five large buildings have been added for academical and conventual purposes, to replace the poor cabins of former days, and year after year some desirable improvement adds to the beauty of the premises.

The heroic Mother Eleonora still lives (1878) afflicted by bodily sufferings, but still enjoying all the youthful cheerfulness and courage of her pioneer days.

A new field of usefulness was opened to the missionary zeal of the Friends of Mary, in the year 1852. Right Rev. J. B. Lamy, Bishop of Santa Fé, New Mexico, having heard of the self-denial of Father Nerinckx' spiritual children, and of the severe training they had gone through, concluded they were the very ones whom Divine Providence had designed for the laborious missions which the Holy See had confided to his pastoral care. He applied for a colony of sisters, and his request was cheerfully granted; faithful to its traditions, and to the injunctions of its founder, Loretto could not refuse a mission which seemed to promise nothing but hardships and privations. Mother Mathilda Wills, and Sisters Catherine, Mary Magdalen, Monica, Hilaria, and Roberta were appointed, and left Loretto on Sunday, June 27, 1852, after Mass, arriving the same evening at Bardstown, where they were greatly encouraged by the Jesuit Fathers. They spent the next day at the Con-

vent of Cedar Grove, in Portland, and arrived in St. Louis on Thursday morning, July 1st. Archbishop Kenrick sent them to the Sisters of Charity; but, Bishop Lamy not having yet returned from New Orleans, they profited by the delay to visit their house of St. Ferdinand, Florissant. As soon as they heard of the Bishop's arrival, they joined him in St. Louis, and left that city, July 10th, by the steamer *Kansas*, which was to convey them as far as Independence. A family, and some other persons also belonged to the Bishop's suite.

The sisters had accepted the mission in a true spirit of self-abnegation; yet they little dreamed, as the spires of the city receded from view, how soon Providence was going to put their virtue to the test. "There had already been some cases of cholera on board, when, on Friday, the 16th, at two A. M., Mother Mathilda was attacked; her sufferings lasted till about two o'clock in the evening of the same day, when she gave up her soul into the hands of her Maker, after having received the Sacraments of Penance and Extreme Unction from the Bishop. Two hours later, the steamer landed at Mr. Todd's warehouse, six miles from Independence. In the meantime, Sister Monica had also contracted this terrible disease, and the landing was truly affecting, the sisters following the couch of their dying sister and the coffin of their Dear Mother. The inhabitants stood in such dread of the cholera that the sisters were

not allowed to enter their houses, and were therefore obliged to remain in the warehouse.

"The next morning, July 17th, three of the sisters, with the Bishop and some other persons, accompanied the carriage which conveyed the corpse of Mother Mathilda to its last resting-place, in the graveyard of Independence. But on the way, they were met by a sheriff, who had been deputed by the authorities to forbid entrance into the town for fear of contagion; however, the Bishop's firm attitude, and perhaps, too, compassion at the sad spectacle, caused this official to relent. They continued their way to the graveyard, and there they saw the cold earth receive into its bosom the remains of her whom they had loved and reverenced. Mother Mathilda Mills was about thirty-three years old, twelve of which she had spent in the convent. She possessed the virtues which adorn a religious, and a sweet and amiable temper which endeared her to all. She had been assistant Superior, and member of the Central Council two years.

"The Bishop now took the three sisters, Catharine, Hilaria, and Roberta, to the town, and left them there, whilst Sister Magdalen remained in the warehouse with Sister Monica. But, on the night of the following Monday, July 19th, Sister Magdalen herself was attacked with the cholera, and made what she believed to be her last confession. The place being ill-suited for ladies, especially religious ones, sick unto

death, the Bishop, unable to make better arrangements, had the two dying sisters removed to tents about two miles from the town. The poor sisters were much better off there than in the warehouse, although they had many inconveniences to bear, and had nothing but the canvas tent to screen them from the burning heat of July. They received every possible attention from the two ladies who formed part of the Bishop's caravan, particularly from Mrs. Dermedy, who treated them with a mother's care. After a few days, Sister Magdalen, began to recover. On Sunday morning, July 23d, the three sisters came from Independence, and heard Mass said by Bishop Lamy, in a tent. On the following Thursday, he took the sisters to Mrs. Chambers, who received them kindly, although Sister Magdalen was just convalescent from the cholera. It was impossible for Sister Monica to proceed any further, her recovery being doubtful; and, in spite of her great desire of pursuing the journey to New Mexico with the others, she returned to Independence until her health should be sufficiently restored to return to the convent at Loretto. As Sister Magdalen could travel in a carriage, although very weak, they left Independence on Saturday, July 31st, to go to camp some four miles distant, whither the Bishop and her company had already gone. After their arrival, the sisters went to confession, and, the next morning, received Holy Communion at the hands of the Bishop.

"After the death of Mother Mathilda, Sister Magdalen was chosen to fill the office of Superior; this election was approved and confirmed at Loretto.

"On the 1st of August, they all traveled together for the first time, but they had proceeded but a few miles when one of the wagons broke down. On the evening of the same day, the sisters' tent could not be pitched on account of the heavy rain, and they remained in the carriages. During the night, the rain continued to pour in torrents, and the warring elements seemed to bid each other defiance. The sisters were much terrified at the unusal fury of the storm, which at times seemed ready to shatter to pieces their frail tenement, and they sought protection in prayer.

"On the Sunday following, August 8th, Bishop Lamy celebrated the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass near the first Indian hut on the road, and gave a short instruction on charity to his company, the majority of whom were outside the tent. They reached *Council Grove* on the eve of the Assumption. They confessed the same evening, and the next morning, according to their rules, renewed their vows in time of Mass, just before Holy Communion. On Sunday, August 29th, they had Mass at *Pawnee Fork*, where they remained the whole day, and saw the first buffalo killed. On Tuesday, September 7th, the party arrived at *Fort Atkinson*, Kansas, a short distance from which the sisters

were greatly terrified, seeing themselves surrounded by three or four hundred Indians. These savages always loiter thereabouts, where their best hunting grounds are situated, and, when they can do so with impunity, attack caravans. On this occasion, they seemed peaceable; the Bishop was even enabled to baptize the child of a captive Mexican women. Still, as their intentions were not known, the Bishop thought it prudent not to make any move, hoping they would retire; but, as they seemed disposed to remain, he ordered his company to march in the evening, and the caravan traveled all night, as the Indians do not generally make their attacks during the night. The sisters remained in the carriages all that day.

"After this, they crossed the Arkansas, and reached *Cimarron* on Sunday, September 12th. On the 14th, the Very Rev. Vicar-general Machebeuf, with a party of men and animals, met the caravan near *Red river*. This meeting was most agreeable, and the assistance most opportune, for the jaded animals had just been obliged to rest two days in succession. Friday, the 17th, they reached *Fort Bartley;* this was the first time they had slept under a roof for nearly two months. Here the Holy Sacrifice was offered both by Bishop Lamy and Father Machebeuf, a pretty large congregation having assembled at the news of the Bishop's arrival. Saturday, the 18th, they reached *Las Vegas*, the first Mexican town they had yet seen. The

next morning, the Bishop said Mass in a private dwelling, not far from the town, and also preached. He remained in Las Vegas, and sent Father Machebeuf on with the sisters. On the night following, Tuesday, September 21st, they arrived at the Bishop's 'rancho,' or farm, about fifteen miles from Santa Fé. During the journey, the Bishop said Mass every Sunday, and the sisters confessed and communicated.

"On Sunday the 26th, the sisters left the ranch and started for Santa Fé, where they arrived at four P. M. The people, with some Mexican priests, went several miles to meet them; as they approached the city, the crowd increased so much that the carriages could scarcely pass. Triumphant arches had been erected, and the bells of the different churches were all pealing. The sisters were received at the door of the cathedral, and presented with holy water by a priest, then led to the foot of the altar, to places prepared for them. The *Te Deum* was sung, accompanied by Mexican music, *i. e.* violin, guitars, etc.; the episcopal blessing followed (the Bishop having entered Santa Fé the Thursday previous). The sisters were now conducted to their house, by the Bishop, the Vicar-general, and clergy. The house and all its appurtenances were as convenient as could be expected in New Mexico.

"The sisters did not open school immediately, as they needed some time to apply themselves

to the study of the language of the country: Spanish. In November they received their first boarders, two children who had lost their mother. When they were admitted, the Bishop remarked to Mother Magdalen: 'It is well to begin with an act of charity.' The sisters, however, were amply rewarded, for the two children were baptized the next Christmas, in the convent chapel, and when their father withdrew them from school, he paid for their tuition, whereas the sisters had not expected to receive a cent.

"The school opened in January, 1853, with ten boarders and three day scholars; but, at the close of August, the number had increased to twenty boarders and twenty-two day scholars.

"The house which the sisters occupied had been ceded to them by Bishop Lamy who lived in the same building, but in another square or *plazita* entirely separated from them. As their house was now too small, he, in October, 1853, gave up the whole to them, and rented another for himself.

"During the Bishop's absence in Europe, in 1854, his Vicar-general bought him the then best looking house in town, called '*la casa Americana*,' 'the American house,' because it had a shingle roof, all the other roofs in town being flat an covered with earth. The Bishop finding the house too spacious, and in a more retired part of town, determined to give it to the sisters; an orchard and grounds attached to it were laid out, and every thing being ready, he ex-

changed with the sisters, who began to occupy their new home in September, 1855."*

Soon after, the sisters secured the title to their new possession from the Bishop on very reasonable terms. Since then the new province has prospered beyond all human expectations, and, besides the house of Santa Fé, which has been called the convent of *Our Lady of Light*, it possesses the following houses:

St. Gertrudes' in *Mora*. It was established in 1874, whilst Father, now Bishop Salpointe was parish priest of that place. The Bishop made a present of the original house to the sisters, having built another one for the persons who lived there in exchange for the one he wished to donate to the sisters. Mr. Henry Bierbaum afterward made a donation of the greater part of the land now in their possession. New buildings have been erected since

Our Lady of Guadeloupe, in *Taos*. Rev. Gabriel Ussel called the sisters there in 1859, and presented them with a lot which he purchased in exchange for his horse and buggy, giving, besides, $600 toward the erection of their new buildings.

A house had also been established in *Albuquerque*, district of Bernalillo,† but was subsequently

*Extracts from the "Annals of the Convent of our Lady of Light," written in Spanish by Mother M. Magdalen Hayden.

† Another was subsequently commenced in Bernalillo itself in 1875.

broken up. A month later, in 1869, the Convent of Our Lady of Sorrows was founded in *Las Vegas*, district of San Miguel. At first, Mr. Romualdo Baca offered the sisters a part of his own house for one year; before its expiration, he gave them a deed for the whole house, which, with the grounds adjoining, is considered to be worth $6000. However, the sisters will be obliged to build an entirely new house.

Visitation Academy, in *Las Cruces*, in the Mesilla valley, belongs to the Vicariate Apostolic of Nebraska, although situated in New Mexico. The sisters were induced to go there, in 1869, by the generosity of Bishop Salpointe, who had already become their benefactor in Mora.

Denver, Colorado, was also founded from Santa Fé, in 1864, but is now supplied by Loretto, Ky.

As the Novitiate of Santa Fé could not supply subjects enough for the Society's many foundations in New Mexico, three sisters from Loretto, Ky., accompanied Bishop Lamy, who, with Father D. M. Gasparri, S. J., two other Jesuit Fathers and two Sisters of Charity, left St. Louis, on his return from Europe, June 10, 1872. "On Friday, 14th," says Rev. Gasparri, S. J., "we started from Leavenworth in caravans, that is to say, in wagons and carriages, for New Mexico; we were in the carriages, and the provisions in the wagons. On the 21st, we arrived at St. Mary's, at that time a reservation

of the Pottawattomie Indians, where the children of the school came out to meet us. We left St. Mary's on the 24th. On the 29th, feast of St. Peter, we camped at a short distance from Junction City, and, toward noon, four peaceable Indians—perhaps spies—came to see us and remained a while with us. On the 2d of July, we came up with a great many trains and joined them, and, on the following day, we met twelve other Indians, and as many more on the 6th.

"On the 16th we camped about three miles below Fort Dodge, and, on the 17th, in the evening, whilst the animals were being unharnessed from the wagons, toward dusk, we were attacked for the first time, by about fifty Indians. We heard that day that many more had attacked other trains very near us.

"We wished to cross the river on the 22d, at a place called Cimarron Crossing, but we could not. In the morning the cholera broke out, and the same evening a young man of our train who came from Ohio died. Whilst he was dying we were attacked a second time by the Indians, now numbering probably over three hundred. The wagons were tied together, forming an oval figure, with the animals in the middle; the Mexicans stationed themselves between the wagons to fire, the sisters remaining in the middle under a tent. We remained there that night.

"On the 23d we continued our journey, and,

toward evening, Sister Alphonsa Thompson, a native of Kentucky, fell sick; night setting in, we camped, and she, being very ill, received the Last Sacrament. The other sisters waited on her all night, and the next day we had to continue our journey; she was put into a wagon with the four other sisters, and when we had halted, she died, at ten o'clock July 24th, being not quite twenty years old. We all felt most sensibly the death of that sister, so much the more, as no remedies could be procured, in those desert plains, to relieve her; on the other hand, the Indians would not let her die in peace. She was buried in the evening, near the road, in a place well marked and known by the Mexicans. A coffin, the best that could be made under the circumstance was prepared for her, and all accompanied the body in procession, a Jesuit father performing the funeral ceremony, and the Bishop following; before leaving a cross was planted over the grave. The poor sister had expressed a desire not to have her body left there, but to have it taken on with us to New Mexico, fearing perchance that the wild Indians, finding it, would desecrate it. But this could not be done, above all, because the cholera had broken out among us, but also because it is said that the Indians always respect dead bodies; God, moreover, would protect, in a special manner, that body, in which had dwelt a soul as pure and innocent as Sister Alphonsa's.

"One the 26th we separated from the other

wagons, entering Colorado Territory, and traveled alone, crossing the river July 31st; on the 3d of August we reached Trinidad, and on the 15th Santa Fé, the terminus of our journey."

Referring to the sad death of Sister Alphonsa, Bishop Lamy wrote: "The youngest sister of Loretto died, on the 24th of July, from fright, as I considered it, caused by the attack of the savages. She was eighteen years of age, well educated, and a model of virtue." Miss Eleanor Donnelly has immortalized the event in a sweet little poem, which we copy from the *Ave Maria*.*

They made her a grave where the tall grasses wave,
'Neath the blue of the Western sky,
And they laid her to sleep where the wild winds sweep,
Through the bending reeds that sigh.
With a swelling heart they were forced to part
A link from that sacred chain,
And though lovely and bright, it was laid that night,
'Neath the sods on the Western plain.

With many a prayer, they laid her there,
To sleep in that cold, cold bed,
While on her bier, fell as holy a tear,
As e'er embalmed the dead.

*"Ave Maria," Vol. IX, pg. 455. There are a few inaccuracies in these lines, which may readily be condoned on the plea of poetical license; for instance, "reeds" and "eagle's eyry," which are not to be found on the level prairies of the West.

Now, the stag may bound o'er that sacred ground,
And the eagle from his eyry scream,
But no Vesper bell comes to break the spell
That wraps the sleeper's dream.

Ah! far, far away, perchance, that day,
A mother's heart was sore,
With an aching void for the Lamb's sweet bride,
Laid to sleep on Arkansas' shore.
O mother dear! soothe to rest each tear,
Thou to glory a star hast given;
And the spirit chain, though rent in twain,
Shall be clasped again in heaven.

In the morn of youth, her young heart's truth
Sought not the earth or its dust;
But her spirit's wings left earthly things
To fold in the bosom of trust.
O bride of the Lamb, thou hast gone home!
In the Virgin's train art thou;
And the songs that rise o'er the dome of the skies
But echo thy virgin vow.

Let fancy bright, on wings of light,
Now seek that lonely grave,
Where flowers bloom and wild birds sing,
By the dark Arkansas' wave;
Let devotion kneel, for there 'twill feel
A throb unfelt before,
For incense rare doth fill the air,
Though the worshiper's no more.

There, mortal, kneel one hour to feel
That soothing calm within,
When devotion bows o'er holy vows
And prayer has shackled sin.

Oh! for the bliss of an hour like this,
When the soul's deep powers thrill
With the magic tone from mercy's throne,
And passion's waves are still.

Lonely grave by the Western wave;
Oh! pure heart sleeping there,
The winds alone above thee moan
Their sad, wild *requiem* prayer.
E'en the savage here feels a mystic fear
As he stands by that lonely mound,
As the whispering breeze sighs through the trees,
"Thou standest on holy ground."

Then sweetly rest, with the cross on thy breast;
Oh! sweet be thy slumbers here!
May o'er thy head bright wings be spread
By angels watching there!
May no ruder wind sweep o'er thy sleep
Than the breath of Summer roses,
While virtue's tear embalms the bier
Where our martyred dead reposes.

Sister Bridget Spalding filled the office of Dear Mother from 1852 to 1858, when Mother Berlindis Downs was again elected, and remained Superior of the Loretto Society till 1864. When she resigned her authority into the hands of her successor, she had the happiness of counting one hundred and seventy-five sisters who had joined the Society of the Friends of Mary since she first assumed the office in 1846.

Dear Mother Berlindis was intrusted for the third time with the interests of the Society, August 15, 1858, after a dire calamity, which put to the severest test all the energy of which she had given such unmistakable proofs in former years. "On the 20th day of February, 1858," says an eye-witness of the distressing scene, "the convent and church built by Father Chabrat were burned down. The fire originated in the kitchen, about two o'clock A. M., and the house was in full blaze before the inmates were aware of the great danger they were exposed to. The novices had a narrow escape, for, a few minutes after they had been aroused from their slumbers, the floor of the novitiate fell in. It was impossible to arrest the fire; the few men who were on the place made an effort to extinguish it, but they soon found that all their endeavors to stay the progress of the flames were futile. The Blessed Sacrament was removed from the chapel by Rev. Father Wuyts, confessor of the convent, to his own room in an old building on the other side of the yard, and formerly occupied by Fathers Badin and Nerinckx. When he came back, the fire was already sweeping through the church, and he had hardly time to guide the sisters, who were trying to save pictures and statues, out of it, before it was wrapped in flames. Some were almost suffocated by the smoke. The library, which was a very interesting and costly one, and a bell, the like of which was not to be found in

America, and which had been brought over by Father Nerinckx from Belgium, were entirely destroyed. Few articles were saved, and the sisters suffered much for a few days, for, on the very evening of the fire, a heavy snow fell and the weather turned very cold. However, every one seemed to forget herself to provide for her sisters. It was thought, at first, that the loss would be irreparable, and the good sisters were much perplexed and at a loss what to do; but Providence came to their aid, and what was looked upon at first as a great calamity, proved a blessing in disguise. A new church, three times as large as the former one, and a new convent, much larger and better suited to the wants of the community, arose from the ashes of the old structure; old St. Stephen's log-cabin alone remains to remind the Sisters of Loretto of the self-sacrifices of their founder. The speedy erection of the new buildings was mainly due to Mother Berlindis, who superintended the work in all its details."

Sister Bertha Bowles was elected Dear Mother in August, 1864. The same year, a new establishment was opened in *Cairo* under the patronage of St. Joseph, and Mother Elizabeth Hayden gave it the stability and usefulness which distinguish all the institutions of Loretto.

Father Deparcq who had labored for twenty years for the temporal and spiritual welfare of the Friends of Mary, died at the age of sixty-nine years, toward the end of the same year,

1864. The sisters entombed his remains near those of their beloved founder, Father Nerinckx, and the following epitaph marks his resting-place:

†

In memory of Very Rev.
DAVID ALEXANDER DEPARCQ,
who was born in Belgium, Sept.
25, 1795. Came to America in 1818.
Was ordained priest at Bardstown,
Ky., in 1819, and labored in the
missions of Kentucky most
zealously during 44 years.
Having spent his life in the noble
discharge of his many duties,
the saintly missionary retired
to Holy Mary's Church, Calvary
Convent, to spend the evening
of his days; there, after a linger-
ing illness, borne with patient
resignation, surrounded by his
spiritual children, and fortified
by all the aids of Holy Church,
he calmly passed to the presence
of his Creator, on Nov. 9, 1864.
This memorial is placed as an
humble tribute, by his grateful
Daughters of Loretto, whose
Ecclesiastical Superior he was
for 20 years.

After Father Deparcq's death, the Bishop of Louisville acted as immediate superior until 1869, when Rev. Francis Wuyts was appointed

ecclesiastical superior over all the houses of the Society, now established in many States and Territories. Under his prudent and energetic administration the Friends of Mary increase every year in usefulness, whilst they are all thoroughly imbued with the apostolic spirit which was left them by their saintly founder.

In 1864 was established the convent and academy of *Denver*, Colorado; founded by the House of Santa Fé, New Mexico, it is now supplied by Loretto, Ky., as is also the one of *Pueblo*, in the same State, founded in 1875.

St. Augustine's Academy, *Lebanon*, Marion county, Ky., dates from the same year, 1864. The year following the sisters took charge of St. Joseph's school, *Edina*, Knox county, Missouri, where Mr. Peter Early provided them with a house and lot.

Dear Mother Elizabeth Hayden was elected in 1870, and directed the Society until 1876, when Sister Dafrosa Smith was elected to succeed her. Under her superiorship were established: St. Mary's Academy, *Elizabethtown*, Hardin county, Ky., in September, 1870; St. Mary's of Loretto Academy, *Montgomery*, Alabama, in 1873; and Loretto Academy, *St. Louis*, Missouri, in 1874; besides the two alluded to above. Within the last two years, three new houses have been established, viz: St. Mary's Academy, *Moberly*, Missouri, in September, 1877; Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, *Conejos*, Colorado, 1877; and Loretto Academy, *Springfield*, Missouri, 1878.

One hundred and sixty-five sisters have died, since their holy founder went to his eternal rest; and at the present day about three hundred and fifty live in the different houses faithful to the Holy Rule which Father Nerinckx gave them, trying to imitate his many virtues on earth, so to share some day his eternal glory in heaven.

APPENDIX.

I.

HYNMS COMPOSED BY FATHER NERINCKX, AND OFFERED BY HIM TO RIGHT REV. BENEDICT JOSEPH FLAGET, ON THE OCCASION OF THE CONSECRATION OF BARDSTOWN CATHEDRAL, AUGUST 15, 1819.

CELSISSIMO ET REVERENDISSIMO DOMINO DNO. FLAGET.

An essay on the Assumption of the glorious Virgin Mary, particular patroness of St. Thomas Seminary.

August 15, 1819.

HYMN.

Come ev'ry pure and loving soul,
Harmonious concerts raise,
Sound Mary's praise from pole to pole,
Oh! strike your sweetest lays!

Let's sing on this, our festive day,
The triumph of our Queen,
Who mounts aloft and wings her way
To Heaven's realms serene.

The Son Divine, whom once she bore
And nourished at her breast,
Disdains to let her body pure
With sinful mortals rest.

It was not meet that sacred fane
Of very grace divine,
Never defiled with sinful stain,
Should rest in human shrine.

From earthly chains at length set free,
She leaves this world below—
She flies, O God, she flies to Thee!
Whence purest pleasures flow.

Ten thousand thousand angels bright,
In sweet melodious song,
Attend their Queen's triumphant flight,
And 'round her joyous throng.

She sweeps the fields of ether pure,
Borne on the wings of love;
Seraphic spirits fly before,
And lead the train above.

They soar beyond the azure sky
To heaven's golden sphere;
The blazing portals open fly,
And welcome in the fair.

"And who is this, like troops array,
This dread and glorious one?
Fair as the moon, or opening day,
And chosen as the sun?"

Thus from within.—The Heavens nod,
And all the courts exclaim:
"*She's mother to our Savior God,*
And Mary is her name!"

The King of ages, awful bows,
The Son leaps from his throne—
This greets his Mother, that his Spouse;
Their Queen the heavens own.

Refulgent rays of heavenly light
Gleam o'er the Virgin's face;
She takes her seat at Jesus' right—
The source of all her grace.

O Mary, now enthroned above,
Star of this boist'rous sea,
Receive the expressions of our love,
And guard us safe to thee.

To God the Father, and the Son
Born of the Spotless Maid,
And Holy Spirit, three in one,
Be endless honor paid.

SOME PIOUS SENTIMENTS ON THE FLOWERS WHICH ADORN THE ALTAR.

Soft, beauteous plants of nature fair,
Which fost'ring hands with caution rear,
Or in the woods spontaneous grow,
Where purling streams in murmurs flow;
The fairest off'ring nature yields
To deck the fane or grace the fields!
Few, holiest ones of teeming earth,
Few rightly know to rate your worth.
Who can behold with pensive eye
The varied tints with which you vie
Even with the starry-vaulted sky,

And not adore the potent hand
Which formed the hills and trembling land,
And from an undigested pile
Called forth the world, and bid it smile!
All nature chants her author's praise,
In mute, indeed, yet noblest ways;
But you, fair flowers, above the rest
Acquit yourselves of this the best.
I plucked you when the morning dew
Increased your native blushing hue;
I placed you by my Savior's side,
Where now you spread a fragrance wide,
While wafted on the breezy tide
Before the Lord you spend your bloom
And sweetly fill the sacred room.
Who will me grant, sweet plants, like you,
To Jesus dear forever true,
Before the Lord to spend my life,
Far from the noisy crowd of strife?
Oh! had I from my early years,
When infant age the soul endears,
Clad in the robes of innocence,
E'er paid my Lord the sweet incense
Of fervent, holy, loving prayer,
Free from the world's tumultuous care!
Ah, when shall I diffuse around,
As meads with flow'ry verdure crowned,
The odor sweet of virtue's works?
But ah! my torpid soul still lurks!
The gentle brooks, the verdant plains,
E'er laud their God in silent strains;
And shall not I pay to his name
My homage, too, so just a claim?
Yes, Savior God; yes, Jesus dear,
Hence, Thee to serve shall be my care;

For Thee I 'll spend life's fleeting day,
Till laid beneath the cold, damp clay;
Nor shall the grave's consuming sod
Debar my soul from Christ, her God!
For Him I'll live; for Him I'll die;
To Him I 'll rise beyond the sky.
No more, ye flowers, I wish your lot,
For soon your pleasing bloom must rot;
But my immortal soul shall live
In endless bliss, if I now give
To God my life, and in the embrace
Of holy love preserve His grace.
O heavenly love! O sweetest thought,
Which soothes a life with evils fraught!
Arise, O child of faith! illume
The dark precincts of mortal tomb;
Hold forth, display your cheering light,
Dispel the gloomy shades of night!

II.

ECCLESIASTICAL SUPERIORS OF LORETTO.

1. Rev. Charles Nerinckx, *Founder and Superior*, . 1812–24
2. Rev. Chabrat, *Superior*, ... 1824–34
3. Rev. Walter Coomes, ... 1834–35
4. Right Rev. Bishop Chabrat, ... 1835–46
5. Rev. David A. Deparcq, ... 1846–64
6. The Right Rev. Bishop of Louisville, . . 1864–69
7. Rev. J. F. Wuyts, ... 1869–

III.

MOTHER SUPERIORS OF LORETTO.

1. Ann Rhodes, *by Election*, ... 1812
2. Mary Rhodes, " 1812–22
3. Juliana Wathen, " 1822–24
4. Isabella Clarke, " 1824–26
5. Sabina O'Brien, " 1826–32
6. Josephine Kelly, " 1832–38
7. Isabella Clarke, " 1838–42
8. Generose Mattingly, *by Episcopal Appointment*, 1842–43
9. Berlindis Downs, " " . 1843–46
" " *by Election*, ... 1846–52
10. Bridget Spalding, " 1852–58
11. Berlindis Downs, " 1858–64
12. Bertha Bowles, " 1864–70
13. Elizabeth Hayden, " 1870–76
14. Dafrosa Smith, " 1876

IV.

STATISTICS OF THE LORETTO SOCIETY, IN 1879.

NAME.	Established.	PLACE.	No. Sisters in 1879.	
			Professed.	Novices.
Loretto Mother House	1812	Marion Co., Ky.	65	40
Calvary Academy	1816	Marion Co., Ky.	30	
Bethlehem Academy	1832	Hardin Co., Ky.	30	
St. Vincent's Academy	1839	Cape Girardeau, Mo.	18	
St. Benedict's Academy	1842	Portland, Ky.	20	
Loretto Academy	1847	Florissant, Mo.	30	
St. Ann's Academy	1847	Osage Mission, Kan.	20	
Convent of Our Lady of Light	1852	Santa Fé, New Mexico.	20	8
Our Lady of Guadalupe	1859	Taos, New Mexico.	14	
St. Joseph's Academy	1863	Cairo, Ills.	18	
St. Mary's Academy	1864	Denver, Col.	6	
St. Augustine's Academy	1864	Lebanon, Ky.	7	
Annunciation Academy	1864	Mora, New Mexico.	6	
Immaculate Conception Acad'y.	1864	Las Vegas, New Mexico.	6	
St. Joseph's Academy	1865	Edina, Mo.	5	
St. Catharine's Academy	1868	New Haven, Ky.	6	
St. Mary's Academy	1870	Elizabethtown, Ky.	6	
Visitation Academy	1870	Las Crusas, N. M.	8	4
St. Mary's of Loretto Academy.	1873	Montgomery, Ala.	12	
Loretto Academy	1874	St. Louis, Mo.	18	
St. Joseph's Academy	1875	Earlington, Ky.	5	
Loretto Academy	1875	Bernalillo, New Mexico.	3	
Loretto Academy	1876	Pueblo, Col.	5	
Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.	1877	Conejos, Col.	5	
St. Mary's Academy	1877	Moberly, Mo.	7	
Loretto Academy	1878	Springfield, Mo.	5	

Besides the above institutions, the Sisters of Loretto have charge of three parochial schools in Louisville, three in St. Louis, Mo., one at Florissant, Mo., one at Cape Girardeau, Mo., and one at Springfield, Mo., attended to by thirty sisters in all. And besides the academies at New Haven and Lebanon, they have a negro school in each place.

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